

HAPPINESS
AND OTHER PLAYS

J. HARTLEY MANNERS

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DRAMATIC WORKS OF J. HARTLEY MANNERS

HAPPINESS
AND
OTHER PLAYS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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“Peg O’ My Heart”

*A Novel founded by Mr. Man-
ners on his Comedy of Youth
of the same title.*

HAPPINESS AND OTHER PLAYS

BY
J. HARTLEY MANNERS



CENTRAL MISSOURI
STATE UNIVERSITY

Warrensburg,
Missouri

NEW YORK
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1914

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PRODUCED AT THE CORT THEATRE

NEW YORK CITY

ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 6TH, 1914

WITH THE FOLLOWING CASTS

HAPPINESS

A STUDY

PHILIP CHANDOS.....	<i>H. Reeves-Smith</i>
FRITZ SCOWCROFT.....	<i>Peter Bassett</i>
MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE.....	<i>Violet Kemble-Cooper</i>
JENNY.....	<i>Laurette Taylor</i>

JUST AS WELL

A TWENTIETH CENTURY ROMANCE

HON. DOLEEN SWEETMARCH.....	<i>Laurette Taylor</i>
MRS. CARFAX.....	<i>Emilie Melville</i>
MAID.....	<i>Yvonne Jarrette</i>
CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE.....	<i>Hassard Short</i>

THE DAY OF DUPES

AN ALLEGORY

THE ARTIST.....	<i>H. Reeves-Smith</i>
THE POLITICIAN.....	<i>Clarence Handyside</i>
THE FINANCIER.....	<i>Reginald Mason</i>
THE LITTÉRATEUR.....	<i>Hassard Short</i>
THE ATTENDANT.....	<i>Emilie Melville</i>
THE 'DUPE'.....	<i>Laurette Taylor</i>

HAPPINESS

WRITTEN IN 1914

“Do ye know what I think happiness is *really?*
Lookin’ forward.”

CHARACTERS

PHILIP CHANDOS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

FRITZ SCOWCROFT

JENNY

*The action passes in Mrs. Chrystal-Pole's Apartment
in New York City, toward evening on a long May day.*



"SHABBY JENNY"

HAPPINESS

The curtain discloses a comfortably furnished room of a modern apartment-house. The furniture is neither elaborate nor tawdry. The hangings and pictures are in good taste, yet without the personal note of selection being apparent. The effect is that of affluence without enthusiasm. An owner of beautiful things with the sense of beauty lacking in the owner.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE, a charming young widow of twenty-seven, is lying in a window-seat, fast asleep; the sun streaming in on her naturally clear complexion and genuinely blonde hair. The face is quite at rest, the features relaxed, the breathing slight. She is evidently in a light, dreamless sleep.

FRITZ SCOWCROFT, a burly, genial, hearty man of fifty-five, is standing with his back to the mantelpiece, good-naturedly waiting for her to wake. He is whistling a tune under his breath. After a few seconds he looks at his watch, smiles, turns round and adjusts his hair and tie in the mirror, then walks quietly over to the door, opens it and is about to pass out when MRS. POLE stretches lazily and yawns heartily.

SCOWCROFT

[Turns in doorway.] Awake, "Mouse-y"?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Looks at him languidly.*] Yes, father — for a minute. [*Closes her eyes and settles herself back to sleep again.*]

SCOWCROFT

[*Closes door, goes to MRS. POLE and beams down at her. He gently tugs at the point of her shoe. Once again MRS. POLE opens her eyes and looks at him smiling down at her good-naturedly.*] Make it five minutes, will ye?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Looks at SCOWCROFT steadily; she gradually straightens up; the lassitude slowly disappears.*]

SCOWCROFT

Wide awake?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Oh, yes; I suppose so: for the rest of the evening. What is it?

SCOWCROFT

Dropped in to see ye. Told the maid not to wake ye. So I just stood about for a bit. I was going when you waked up. Everything all right?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Deadly dull.

SCOWCROFT

[*Sits down near her.*] All alone here?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

SCOWCROFT

No companion — or — anyone?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

SCOWCROFT

Why don't ye come home?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

What for?

SCOWCROFT

Less lonesome for ye.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Think so?

SCOWCROFT

Yer mother does. Will ye?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

SCOWCROFT

Why not?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I'd rather stay here.

SCOWCROFT

Are ye happy?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Not a bit.

SCOWCROFT

Yer mother and I are worrying about ye.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

You've no need to.

SCOWCROFT

Still grievin' over Mark?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

SCOWCROFT

He was a good husband to ye, wasn't he?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Was he?

SCOWCROFT

He always seemed to be — to me. *Wasn't* he?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose so — as husbands go.

SCOWCROFT

Let me see — how long's he been dead?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Oh, a year — or ten months, or — really I've forgotten.

SCOWCROFT

That's a funny way to talk of yer dead husband.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I don't want to talk about him at all.

SCOWCROFT

[*Looks at her in a puzzled, curious manner.*] Feel well?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, yes. *Physically* — quite well.

SCOWCROFT

Sleep all right?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Looks like it.

SCOWCROFT

Eat good?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

SCOWCROFT

Then what's the matter, Mouse?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I don't know, I suppose I'm just *rusting* out.

SCOWCROFT

Rusting?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

You either keep *bright* or *rust*. I don't keep bright, so I suppose I must be *rusting*.

HAPPINESS

SCOWCROFT

Do you go out much?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

SCOWCROFT

See many people?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

SCOWCROFT

Why don't ye?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Oh, what's the use? I'm tired of the *old* ones and the *new* ones are impossible. What's the use?

SCOWCROFT

You need rousing.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose I do.

SCOWCROFT

Be up and doing. Nothing like it. Sets the blood circulating and clears the brain. Go out more. Meet people. Ever go to the opera now?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Never.

SCOWCROFT

Why don't ye?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I've been.

SCOWCROFT

Go again. It grows on you.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

What — for instance?

SCOWCROFT

Drop in the Italian nights.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Italian opera is done to death. They haven't thought of a new theme in fifty years. The same old *motifs* all over again.

SCOWCROFT

I love 'em. I never miss "*Rigoletto*." Thousands like me. The house is always packed. [*Sings "La Donne e Mobile."*] Ta ta ta lum ti tum.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Closes her eyes.*] Don't.

SCOWCROFT

[*Stops singing. Thinks. Then suddenly:*] You used to like Wagner.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I was a child then. One grows out of Wagner as one does out of one's clothes. After a while neither fit. I can't bear them now. Noisy beasts. They scream at you until you can't hear them.

HAPPINESS

SCOWCROFT

I like 'em — once a year. Shakes one up.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

So does a house-cleaning.

SCOWCROFT

Well, what about the theatre?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

What about it?

SCOWCROFT

Do you ever go?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Never.

SCOWCROFT

You used to.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I don't any more. I hate being *improved*. I detest uncleanliness. I loathe disease. Why waste evenings out of a life we live but once, watching *both* under the guise of "improvement"?

SCOWCROFT

That's true. They *are* a bit *raw* just now.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Very.

SCOWCROFT

Why don't ye *travel* then? That 'ud wake you up.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Would it?

SCOWCROFT

Finest thing in the world.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Where?

SCOWCROFT

How about Switzerland? On top of the mountains.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

They make me dizzy.

SCOWCROFT

Oh! Well, the Rhine, then? Up one day and down the next. Keep on the move all the time. Eh?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I detest German cooking.

SCOWCROFT

[*Crestfallen.*] Do ye? [*Brightens.*] Italy! The wonderful galleries.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I can't bear their railways — and galleries weary me. Besides, I've seen them.

SCOWCROFT

[*Persevering.*] Well, take a run over to *Paris*.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Shivers.*] Horrible! Over-dressed women and under-bred tourists.— Oh, no! No more travelling.

HAPPINESS

SCOWCROFT

I don't know. I like Paris still. [*Laughs and chuckles to himself as old-time memories revive. Then he proceeds again to question his daughter.*] Read much?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

SCOWCROFT

You used to love it.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I don't any more.

SCOWCROFT

That's a pity. There are some of the biggest writers today there have ever been. I read 'em all.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

For instance?

SCOWCROFT

[*Thinks.*] *Wells!* There's a great chap. A good, solid thinker.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Microscopic and middle-class. He gives one mental indigestion.

SCOWCROFT

You don't tell me. I find him very satisfactory. Do ye like Arnold Bennett?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Not at all. He's as insular as the people in an English omnibus.

SCOWCROFT

That so? Bright and original, I'd call him. Then there's Galsworthy. *He* has something to say.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

He looks upon himself as a missionary. He is always — apparently — trying to reform something that hasn't existed for years. He is most irritating.

SCOWCROFT

[*Despondently.*] Dear me! He always gives *me* something to think about. [*Suddenly.*] Ah! Shaw! Bernard Shaw! What about *him*?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

He suggests nothing so much as an imitation diamond.

SCOWCROFT

Diamond?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Imitation! He glitters but doesn't stand analysis. He makes one so sorry for the dead and the living he is borrowing from. They put things so much better.

SCOWCROFT

Don't ye find him amusing? *I* do.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose it *is* amusing to find a writer editing everyone else under the mask of originality. He makes me furious. [*Pause.*] I hate reading. Especially novels.

SCOWCROFT

[*Laughs uneasily.*] You're in a bad way, "Mouse-y"!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Drop the "y," father, please. It doesn't suit anything. "*Mouse*" is bad enough, but "*Mouse-y*"! Atrocious!

SCOWCROFT

[*Cheerfully.*] All right, dear. Anything to please ye. Why don't you go into one of the "movements"? Match your brain with others. Ye're clever enough.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I dislike *talking* — and I abhor *listening*.

SCOWCROFT

Well, then, take up *science*.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Don't! Bumpy foreheads, furrowed faces and spectacles! Don't!

SCOWCROFT

Humph! Go out in the air much?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No. I can't bear walking.

HAPPINESS

SCOWCROFT

Ride horseback?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Too jolty.

SCOWCROFT

Get an automobile.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I have one.

SCOWCROFT

Use it much?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Never. It's so monotonous. If one goes fast enough everything seems the same.

SCOWCROFT

You used to *paint*. Good pictures, too, *I* thought.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I couldn't draw a straight line, now.

SCOWCROFT

Well, then, write something *yerself*.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

No one could read it. And if they *could*, they *wouldn't*.

SCOWCROFT

You need a change. Go and live in the country.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter.
And the insects! The town's bad enough — but the
country — unbearable.

SCOWCROFT

Ye could grow flowers — and things.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Flowers make me ill. They always remind me of a
sick-room or a stupid opera. Senseless things.

SCOWCROFT

[*Dejectedly.*] Oh!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Looks up at him.*] No, father! I'm afraid there's
no loophole.

SCOWCROFT

Ever think of marryin' again?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Good heavens, *no!* I've tried it. Nothing in it.

SCOWCROFT

You used to love Mark.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Did I?

SCOWCROFT

[*Reproachfully.*] "Mouse"!

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose I did.— At first. And *afterwards* — when he was away. Poor Mark! He was always trying to make jokes. Such bad ones, too. Why do some men think it their sole duty to try and *amuse* us? So many husbands remind me of the clown in a child's circus. They must be *funny* at all costs. It makes life so pathetic, doesn't it?

SCOWCROFT

I don't know. I make a few myself once in a while. I like cheerfulness. Yer mother laughs,— sometimes. Are ye goin' to live on here?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose so.

SCOWCROFT

How long?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I haven't the least idea. Until something happens, I suppose.

SCOWCROFT

Something happen? What *could* happen?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

That's it. *What?* Nothing could make life worth while now — except a miracle. And the age of miracles is past, isn't it?

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SCOWCROFT

[*Changes his whole manner; takes her hand and pats it.*] Sorry, "Mouse." I've done all *I* could, haven't I?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Have you?

SCOWCROFT

Yes. Both your mother and I have. Ever since ye were a baby.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose so. Fed me and dressed me and had me taught and then married me off. What more *can* parents do?

SCOWCROFT

I don't know of anything more *we* could have done.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

It's a wonderful life — for a woman — to be born of *good, rich* parents, isn't it? Everything done for her.

SCOWCROFT

It was for you. Anything to make you happy. That's all we cared for.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

And what's the result? Here I am, an *unhappy*, tired, *old* woman of twenty-seven. The poorest girl in this city is happier than I am.

SCOWCROFT

Are ye reproachin' me?

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MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No, father, I'm not. You had your life to live. You've lived it. You've worked hard. You've succeeded. But, oh, how often I've seen the children of hard-working, successful men come into the world *old* and *careworn* and *disillusioned*. The parents had put their best into their *lives*. Then the child came along, tired of the struggle before beginning. Comfort destroys the incentive to effort. Those who have never known poverty have, sometimes, but little sympathy with the poor. The selfish don't know pity. I don't. Too much has been given me — too much done for me. It's a curious, sordid, world-weary life to the child of the undeveloped rich,

SCOWCROFT

I don't know that I've been particularly selfish. *I've* given to the poor.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

But you've never lived among them.

SCOWCROFT

[*Indignantly.*] Lived with them? I should think not. I worked hard all my life so that I wouldn't have to.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

It might have been better for us — for *me* perhaps — if we had. Sometimes I've looked from the window of our car and envied a little group of bright-eyed, pinched-faced working girls, laughing in the streets in their

HAPPINESS

lunch-hour. The world is all before *them*. It has a sense of mystery. It's never had any for me. [*Sighs.*] Where will it all end? [*The telephone bell rings.*] Don't go, father. [*MRS. POLE goes to the telephone, takes off the receiver.*] Well? [*Pause.*] Yes. [*Pause.*] Yes,—I'm at the 'phone. [*Pause.*] Who? [*Pause.*] Spell it. [*Pause. Spells it aloud and writes the name on the telephone-pad.*] C-h-a-n-d-o-s. Oh, yes. Tell him to come up. [*Hangs up receiver and goes to SCOWCROFT.*] Philip Chandos. Remember him?

SCOWCROFT

Old Silas Chandos's son?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes. Another of *us*.

SCOWCROFT

How?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

His father bought something, or invented something, or found something in the ground that didn't belong to him, and made a fortune. Then he brought Philip into the world.

SCOWCROFT

I remember Phil when he was a boy. A very bright lad.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Was he? Look at him *now*.

HAPPINESS

SCOWCROFT

Now?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Walking about until the end comes,—doing nothing worth while.

SCOWCROFT

Well, he ought to be ashamed of himself. His father worked hard enough.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Too hard. That's the pity. He cursed his son with a fortune, so there's no need for Phil to work. He just drifts along. One of *us*.

SCOWCROFT

You put it all on the *fathers*, eh?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

A great deal.

SCOWCROFT

I am sorry I came now.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Don't say that.

SCOWCROFT

I came in all good-nature and cheerfulness. Now I feel as if I'd been to a funeral. Ye've taken all the life out of me. [*Goes toward the door.*]

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Won't you stay a little longer? Mr. Chandos is coming up.

SCOWCROFT

No. I don't want to meet him. If *money, care* and *love* have done this for you, I'd rather not have made anything. You've made me thoroughly miserable.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I make *everyone* miserable who comes near me, father.

SCOWCROFT

[*Stands over her, looking down at her gloomily.*]
How is it all going to end? I am afraid for ye.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

There was a time when I was afraid for myself. I don't care now.

[*Enter PHILIP CHANDOS, a tired, worn-looking man of thirty-five. He is scrupulously dressed, and has the bearing of a man of culture and breeding. He is bored in manner and disillusioned in outlook. He bows gravely and courteously to MRS. POLE; looks inquiringly at SCOWCROFT; then gives him a faint glance of recognition.*]

CHANDOS

Mr. Scowcroft?

SCOWCROFT

Philip Chandos?

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

Yes. [*They shake hands.*]

SCOWCROFT

Yer father and I were old friends.

CHANDOS

I know.

SCOWCROFT

Years ago.

CHANDOS

It must have been. He's dead twenty.

SCOWCROFT

No, sir, *ten*.

CHANDOS

Is that all? It seems twenty.

SCOWCROFT

One of the finest men of his day.

CHANDOS

So they tell me.

SCOWCROFT

What do you mean—" *So they tell you* "?

CHANDOS

Oh, several people speak nicely of him.

SCOWCROFT

Well?

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

They didn't have to *live* with him. *I* did.

SCOWCROFT

[*Sternly.*] It would be a good thing for you if ye were more like him.

CHANDOS

Think so?

SCOWCROFT

Yes, I do.

CHANDOS

I don't. [*Crosses to MRS. POLE and greets her wearily.*]

SCOWCROFT

Your father left his mark on his time, Mr. Philip Chandos.

CHANDOS

I know he did. He *bled* his time for all he could make out of it.

SCOWCROFT

You ought not to kick. He left you pretty well off.

CHANDOS

I don't kick about *that*. But if my father were alive today and practiced the same methods he did in "his time," he would die in the penitentiary. I've lived on the proceeds of his dishonesty.

HAPPINESS

SCOWCROFT

That's a nice way to speak of one of the most respected men in his country.

CHANDOS

I didn't mean to be *nice*. I'm carrying his burden, and hundreds like me. My father profited by his roguery, then he married and brought *me* into the world and had all the glory of being *my* father. I have all the *reproach* of being his son. And I suffer every day of my life because he made a disreputable fortune, left it to me — *and nothing else*.

SCOWCROFT

You're a fine son.

CHANDOS

Am I? I don't think so. At least, I don't pretend to be. *He* always posed as a *good father* — and he got away with it.

SCOWCROFT

Well, I'm ——! [*Breaks off.*] Oh, there's no encouragement today in bringing children into the world.

CHANDOS

I know there isn't. That's why so many have given up doing it.

SCOWCROFT

[*Furiously.*] Bah!

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

[*Quietly.*] Just so. [*Turns his back on SCOWCROFT.*]

SCOWCROFT

[*To MRS. POLE.*] Good-bye.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Good-bye, father.

SCOWCROFT

I don't know what's the matter with young people to-day.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

The trouble is they're *not* young, father. They never have been. They're born *old*.

SCOWCROFT

[*Scowling at MRS. POLE and CHANDOS.*] You're a fine pair of specimens!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Smiles sadly up at him.*] Aren't we?

SCOWCROFT

I'm glad your mother didn't come.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Quietly.*] So am I.

SCOWCROFT

[*Goes to door, turns and points to CHANDOS, addressing MRS. POLE.*] I leave him to you.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

As a legacy, father?

SCOWCROFT

[*Angrily.*] Bah! [*Goes out of the room.*]

CHANDOS

[*After a pause looks at Mrs. Pole. They both laugh.*] He seems angry.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

He is. About us. He doesn't approve of us.

CHANDOS

[*With a comprehensive gesture.*] Oh! The last generation!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Rather tough on the present, isn't it?

CHANDOS

Very. [*Sighs and walks away, dejectedly.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Watching him.*] What's the trouble?

CHANDOS

I'd like a chat. You understand things.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Bothered?

CHANDOS

A bit.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

All right. Let us talk.

CHANDOS

[*Sits on couch, near her.*] I was in court today.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes?

CHANDOS

I'm free.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Oh.

CHANDOS

There was no use dragging on.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Of course not.

CHANDOS

She would never have got rid of *me*. So *I* had to get rid of *her*.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I see.

CHANDOS

Wretched mess of things, isn't it?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Oh, I don't know. You can start afresh.

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

Oh, no. Once is enough. [*Thinks for a moment: then sighs heavily.*] Lord! When ye look back! Remember the weddin'?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Distinctly.

CHANDOS

Pretty bride, wasn't she?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I thought so.

CHANDOS

I wasn't so bad, then. [*With a little half-smile.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

You looked like a boy.

CHANDOS

And my old dad! All over the place! Proud as a peacock! Strutting about! [*Pause.*] God Almighty! Makes one seem a hundred. [*Pause.*] What a muck of things. [*Pause.*] Had the ball at my feet then, hadn't I? [*Pause.*] Now here I am — back where I was. [*Pause.*] What a mess!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

We've both mashed it up, haven't we?

CHANDOS

Rather.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

What'll you do?

CHANDOS

Don't know.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Go away?

CHANDOS

Think not.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Stay around?

CHANDOS

I suppose so. Dodge the clubs for a while and avoid the restaurants. People forget. Other scandals come along and push your own out. Everybody forgets everything, if ye give 'em time. [*Pause.*] Then I'll blossom out some day when it's all over. [*Pause.*] After all, it's just a milestone. A bit of life chopped off. A few more dead years to look back on. An infinity of dreary ones to look forward to.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I know that feeling. I've had it often.

CHANDOS

Have ye?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Oh, often.

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

What do you do?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Nothing. Just let it have its own way.

CHANDOS

So do I. Then I start off huntin' again.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

For what?

CHANDOS

Happiness.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Do you ever find it?

CHANDOS

I haven't so far.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Do you hope to?

CHANDOS

Sometimes — when the mornin's bright. I get spasms of optimism now and again.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I envy you.

CHANDOS

I haven't had one for a long time. It's about due. Maybe tomorrow — if the sun is shinin'.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I don't remember one since I was a girl.

CHANDOS

That so?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

After all, what is this thing we call life? What does it mean to us who are supposed to have everything we want? One grey day after another. We start afresh every morning with a round of empty, futile occupations. At night we go to a restless sleep — with nothing accomplished. What is our one ambition? What are we all striving for? To kill time.

CHANDOS

Well, we have one consolation. If *we* don't succeed — *time* will — in killing *us*.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

That's about all there is to look forward to. We're a useless lot, Phil.

CHANDOS

I know *I* am.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Take my case: my father's worked all his life —

CHANDOS

So did mine.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

My mother's never done anything.

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

Nor did mine.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Both are of the earth. What was my upbringing? Everything done for me by servants. I used to see my parents a few minutes a day. Then they'd be too tired to give me any attention. Just caresses that meant nothing. My father passed his life *making* money. My mother *spending* it. The only people who visited us were greedy, grasping, hard-headed business men, or foolish, stupid, chattering idiots. As I grew older, anything I wanted I was given without question or restraint. Everything came to me without an effort. Think of my girlhood. I liked music. I was taken to concerts and recitals and operas until I was weary of them. The theatre! I went until I knew every trick. All the illusions went. I wanted to travel. By twenty-one I had been dragged all over Europe until the screech of a train or the scream of a ship's horn disgusted me. I was the lucky one of fortune. I craved for money. A relation died and left me an independence. Everything I've longed for I've had. And always without a struggle! And everything has disappointed me. At twenty-three I married. Hunted happiness again. He was the catch of the year. My luck seemed to hold good. In three months I loathed him. A year ago — or less — he died. For a while I breathed freely. Now I am once more on the hunt — as you are.

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

And I'm a shockin' bad hunter.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

So am I. The quarry eludes me just as I try to grasp it. [*Both sigh, then look at each other and laugh.*]

CHANDOS

Your father is right. We're a fine pair.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Rises and walks about.*]

CHANDOS

Any plans tonight?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

CHANDOS

Let's go somewhere?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Stay here, if you like.

CHANDOS

Too restless for that. Let us go and watch the *others* worryin'. Take our minds off ourselves.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Where?

CHANDOS

I don't care. Any of ten.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I thought you didn't want to be seen?

CHANDOS

Doesn't matter tonight. I'll look 'em over for the last time — for a while.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

All right.

CHANDOS

Kind of farewell dinner, eh?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

CHANDOS

I'll go round and dress and come back and call for you.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I'll be ready. [*Telephone rings. Takes up receiver.*] Hello. [*Pause.*] Yes. [*Pause.*] What is it? [*Pause.*] Oh! Send them up. [*Hangs up receiver. Looks up smilingly at CHANDOS.*] This is really an *event*.

CHANDOS

Oh?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

A new dress.

CHANDOS

From Paris?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Shudders.*] Good heavens, no! The dresses they send *us* are only worn by *cocottes* in France. This is an experiment with a *new* dressmaker. If it's a success, I'll wear it tonight.

CHANDOS

Do. Your eyes are brighter.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Are they?

CHANDOS

And there's a gleam of color in your face.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes?

CHANDOS

Excited?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Almost.

CHANDOS

Splendid. . [*Pause.*] I wish *I* could get a thrill.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I said it was an *event*.

CHANDOS

You're lucky.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Fancy, feeling a new dress *here*. [*Touches her heart.*]

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

[*Nods.*] I know.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Significant, isn't it?

CHANDOS

Yes..

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Smiles.*] We *are* a fine pair.

CHANDOS

[*Goes to door.*] About half an hour?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Heaps of time.

CHANDOS

I hope it will be a success.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

So do I.

CHANDOS

Round off the evening, won't it?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes. [*Knock on the door.*]

[CHANDOS opens it and admits JENNY, a shop-girl, carrying two large boxes, one containing a dress and the other a hat. She is a small, thin, shabby girl of nineteen with keen bright eyes, a quiet, rapid delivery and a whole-hearted, healthy, exuberant manner.]

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*Looking up at CHANDOS.*] Mrs. Chrystal-Pole?

CHANDOS

[*Indicates MRS. POLE.*]

JENNY

[*Plumps the parcels down.*] Breakin' both my arms.

CHANDOS

Half an hour. [*Going out.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Like to look at them?

CHANDOS

[*In doorway.*] Not now. I'll wait and see them on you. It may be an event for me. [*Goes out.*]

[*JENNY stands waiting for instructions, hands on hips, balancing on one foot, in the attitude of one who has to stand all day.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Open them out. I'll call you when I want you. [*Goes into the other room.*]

[*JENNY undoes the bundles, humming vigorously all the time. She takes the hat out first and looks at it with a gasp of joy. Then she takes out the dress. She stares at it with wide open eyes. She thinks a moment, then listens intently — makes up her mind, throws off her jacket and slips the dress on. She*

HAPPINESS

laughs gleefully, whips off her hat and puts on the new one and runs to the mirror to see her reflection. MRS. POLE comes in quietly behind her and stands looking at her. JENNY sees MRS. POLE in the mirror; she looks at her in horror, then turns guiltily, snatches off the hat and begins struggling to get out of the dress.]

JENNY

[Huskily.] I beg your pardon, lady.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

How dare you put those things on?

JENNY

I just couldn't help it. I'd never had a four-hundred-dollar dress on me back before, or a hundred-dollar hat on me head. I just couldn't help it.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Take them back. I don't want them.

JENNY

[Gives a little gasp.] Oh! *[Piteously.]* Don't do that, lady. Please don't do that. They'd turn me away.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Take them back. *[Goes to table, sits and writes a letter.]*

[JENNY watches her; her lips quivering, her eyes filling. She struggles out of the dress, folds it and begins to

HAPPINESS

put it back in the box. She is crying quietly. Suddenly a sob escapes her. MRS. POLE turns and looks at her. JENNY wipes her eyes stealthily with the back of her hand. She puts the hat in the box and begins to cover it with the lid. MRS. POLE walks over to her and stands looking down at her. JENNY shrinks down and lowers her eyes.]

JENNY

I know I oughtn't to have done it. [*Sob.*] Couldn't ye let me off this once? [*Sob.*] I'll never do such a thing again. [*Sob.*] Really I won't. [*Sob.*] Couldn't ye — let — me — off — this — once — lady?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Give it me.

JENNY

[*Hurriedly takes out the hat and hands it to MRS. POLE. She is half-laughing, half-crying.*] Oh, thank ye, lady. Thank ye.

[*MRS. POLE takes the hat, goes to the mirror and puts it on.*]

JENNY

[*Gleefully takes out the dress, snuffling back her tears and chuckling with relief. She goes to MRS. POLE and stands looking at her, mouth open, eyes fixed soulfully on the hat.*] My! — It's — it's wonderful! — On you!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

It's too long this side.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*Quickly.*] Do ye think so? It suits your *long* style. *Anyone* can wear them skimpy ones. Very few ladies could wear *that*. [*Pause. Then in a tone of awed admiration.*] I think it's wonderful.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*A little more interested.*] Rather becoming.

JENNY

It's a *dream* — I think.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Bring the dress in here. [*Goes out, leaving the door open.*]

JENNY

[*Gathers the dress up and follows her out.*] I don't know what came over me, presumin' to put that on. It just seemed to scream out at me "*Try it!*" I'm so sorry, lady.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

That will do.

JENNY

Yes, lady, and thank ye. There we are. Step into it. The right foot. Now the left. That's it. Say, it's a wonder. I forgot the chiffon. [*Hurries back into the room, snuffling and trying to sing. She takes the chiffon from the table and her handkerchief from the pocket of her jacket and goes back, wiping her eyes.*]

HAPPINESS

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I'll go in the next room. There's more light in there — and the glass is bigger.

[*They both come back into the room. MRS. POLE has the dress on and stands in front of the mirror while JENNY hooks it up.*]

JENNY

Looks as if ye was poured into it. Say, it is swell.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

[*Severely.*] Please don't talk.

JENNY

No, lady! [*Proceeds to button the dress.*]

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Take care. You're pinching me.

JENNY

Only me fingers in the way. Clumsy! [Mrs. POLE gives a cry.] It's got to fit tight.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I'll finish it myself.

JENNY

All right, lady. [*Walks round MRS. POLE, looking at the dress.*] It is chic, ain't it?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Spread the train.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

Yes, lady. [*Kneels down and spreads the train out.*] I'm glad the trains are comin' back. Makes the big ones ever so tall, and gives the little ones height. That's about it. [*Rises, and stands back, hands on hips, looking at the effect.*] My! You *do* look like a queen. You'll just drive 'em crazy, that's what ye'll do.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Tell your employers on the whole I am pleased.

JENNY

Sure, I will. *They'll* be, too. Everybody worried over it. It's a dandy colour. Say, d'ye know what it wants? A necklace,—have you got a necklace?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes. Bring me my jewel-box. It's on the table in the next room.

JENNY

Me?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

[*JENNY hurries into the next room, humming vigorously.*]

JENNY

[*From within the room.*] Is it a *black* box?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*Comes back with a large, black jewel-box.*] This it?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

JENNY

[*Chuckles.*] I thought it was a valise. [*Goes to Mrs. POLE and holds the jewel-box up to her.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Open it.

JENNY

Me, lady?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

JENNY

[*Goes to table; opens box; glares at the contents with startled eyes; sinks down, gasping, on a chair.*] Oh, my Gawd!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Looks across at her.*]

JENNY

I never saw so many in me life.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Come, come! [*Impatiently.*]

JENNY

[*Goes to Mrs. POLE with the open box.*]

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Choose one!

JENNY

Me?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Irritably.*] Yes.

JENNY

[*Hunts through the contents of the box.*] What about that one? It looks fine! [*Hands MRS. POLE a necklace; then stares at the jewels again without daring to touch them.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Having fastened the necklace.*] You are right. It is better.

JENNY

Have a green one at your waist?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes. Give me the emerald clasp.

JENNY

[*Searches and finds it and holds it out to MRS. POLE.*] Real emeralds?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes. [*Taking the clasp and fastening it.*]

JENNY

Are they *all* real?

HAPPINESS

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

They are.

JENNY

I've never seen so many before,—only in shop-windows. Never had a chance to touch 'em. [*Laughs a little eerie laugh.*] Fancy ownin' 'em! Don't ye feel frightened?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

JENNY

I would. Look at *that* one,—it's winkin' at me!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Close the box. Put it on the table.

JENNY

Yes, lady. [*Places jewel-box carefully on the table and closes it; then hurries back, humming cheerfully and arranges pleats in the dress, beaming with satisfaction.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Stop humming!

JENNY

Yes, lady.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Satisfied with the effect, gives a little, pleased sigh.*]
Ah!

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*In an awed tone.*] You've got 'em all beat. Nothin' like *that this* season — or any other.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I'll keep it.

JENNY

I should *say* so.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Tell them not to duplicate it.

JENNY

I should say *not*.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

That will do.

JENNY

[*Chuckles contentedly.*] You *do* look happy.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Turns slowly round and looks curiously at her.*] Do I?

JENNY

Sure ye do. An' why shouldn't ye be? It's one thing to be pretty, an' another to have the price to show it off. Ye've got both. Ye're *beautiful* and ye've got the *price*. [*Sighs.*] I beg your pardon. [*Takes up her hat and thick coat and shabby gloves.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Are *you* happy?

HAPPINESS

JENNY

Oh, yes. So long as I please the customers. An' you *are* pleased, ain't ye?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

JENNY

[*Putting on her hat.*] I'm so glad. I thought I'd lost me job sure! [*Puts on coat.*] But you're kind, as well as beautiful, ain't ye?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

How much do you earn a week?

JENNY

[*Enthusiastically, as if mentioning a very large amount.*] *Six dollars!*

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Do you live at home?

JENNY

[*Nods; pulls on a glove.*] Mother an' me — in Brooklyn.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Is your father alive?

JENNY

I don't know.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Oh?

HAPPINESS

JENNY

I don't *think* so. Don't see how he could be. Ye know, he went out to work one morning and never came back. The police said he was made away with. Lots are, ye know. Never heard of. But mother won't believe it. She says he'll come back some day. She thinks he was just *hurt* somewhere — not killed. So she's always hoping.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Showing a little more interest.*] How long ago did that happen?

JENNY

Oh, ten years ago. I was only a kid. We had a nice house then. After father disappeared, mother went out to work, dress-makin', an' brought me up to it — an' — we have a fine little home — and — [*breaks off*]. Here, I mustn't go on talkin' to you —

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Go on talking. Unless you have to go.

JENNY

Oh, no. The shop's closed now — if ye want anything altered though, I can call 'em up and they'll stay.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I don't. It's perfect.

JENNY

[*Standing wearily, first on one foot, then on the other, looks again admiringly at the dress.*] It's a dream,

HAPPINESS

I think. Finest our firm's turned out. [Stifles a yawn.]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

You're tired.

JENNY

A bit.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Sit down.

JENNY

But,— lady —

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Sit down.

JENNY

[Sits, nervously, looking shyly at Mrs. POLE.] Thank ye. *[Smiles up at Mrs. POLE.]* It does tire ye, stand-in' all day.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

How long do you work?

JENNY

Eight to six.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[Shocked.] For *six* dollars?

JENNY

Oh, that's good pay. I only got *four* when I started.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

How much does your mother earn?

HAPPINESS

JENNY

Nothin' reg'lar. Some weeks as much as fifteen — others nothin'. All depends. She hasn't got a steady job now.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

But how do you live?

JENNY

Oh, fine. I've got everything I want. So's mother — 'cept when she worries about father. Then she goes on the cars lookin' for him.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

What?

JENNY

Ye see, she thinks he got his head hurt somehow and forgot us. No one can make her believe he's dead. So every time she gets on a street-car or the subway, she goes right down through the cars lookin' at all the men. [*Sighs.*] Poor mother. When she has a good week she spends hours that way. [*Dejectedly.*] And it costs her a nickel every time she gets on one. An' she comes home all tired an' kind o' quiet-like. Never says anything. Then I make her take some supper and put her to bed an' she's fine in the mornin'.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Looks down at her wonderingly; following a womanly instinct she puts her hand gently on JENNY's shoulder.*]

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*Starts up.*] Want me to go?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Sit still. [*Presses her back on the sofa and sits beside her.*] What are you both looking forward to? You and your mother?

JENNY

[*Puzzled.*] Looking forward to?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

JENNY

Oh, all kinds of things. When I know the business real well and better myself, I'm goin' to save up and have a place of my own, an' mother'll look after everything and just work when she feels like it. An' she can travel up an' down on the cars all day if she wants to. [*Regretfully.*] Though I do wish she didn't. It seems so wasteful like. An' it ends in nothin', an' she's so miserable afterwards. Do you know, lady, up to the time I went to work I used to look at men and wonder if I'd find him. Sometimes I'd ask them if they ever lived in Brooklyn and had a wife an' kid there. Honest, I did. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? Mother got it into me. I feel the same way now — at times. [*Cheerfully.*] But it doesn't last long. I *know* he's dead.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Do you?

HAPPINESS

JENNY

Sure. He wouldn't stay away all this time if he was alive. He liked my mother too much. And *me*. Oh, no. He's dead right enough.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

You poor little thing! [*Takes one of JENNY's hands in both of hers.*]

JENNY

[*Slowly taking her hand away.*] Oh, I'm all right, lady. I'm very healthy an' very strong. Of course, I'm small to *look at*, but I'm really very *big inside*. Ye know, I *feel* big. Did ye ever see a little dog that thought he was a great, big bloodhound? *That's* me. I've got great big thoughts. I know I'm goin' to be very successful some day. Mother knows I am, too. [*Running along excitedly.*] We've heaps to look forward to. Heaps. We stay up o' nights plannin' it all out. Ye know I'm only workin' *this* way with the firm, learnin'. See? When I can dress a bit better, I'm goin' in the fittin' room. Ye meet more people there. An' they pay ye better, too. I'm promised that. That's why I was all broke up just now — when you — you know? An' I deserved it, too. It *was* nice of ye not to send me back. I'd have been chucked — sure. I *was* scared. It's taught me somethin' — I can tell ye. [*Pause.*] But I did want to see myself in a real swell dress — just once! [*Laughs.*] I can't carry it off like you can, can I? You know you've got to be born for a dress like that.

HAPPINESS

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Do you read and write?

JENNY

Oh, yes. I went through public school. Did real well, too, 'cept in 'rithmetic. I hate figures. 'Course I know I don't talk well. No one does in *our* part of Brooklyn. But by-and-bye I'm goin' to take up night school and learn to talk like some o' the customers. [*Laughs.*] They sounded awfully funny at first. Now I like it. It's wonderfully educatin', workin' in a store. Ye know ye see all kinds. I'm sorry for them as works in factories an' places where they don't meet real people. Ye know, the ones that can afford gowns like *that*, an' speak nice, like you do. [*Pause; looks at her admiringly.*] You must be awfully happy. [*Sighs.*] It's wonderful to be *real* happy. I am—sometimes. When I've everything all built up in my mind. I love to dream out all I'm goin' to do. [*Pause; shyly.*] I'm happy now,—talkin' to you. [*Laughs confusedly.*] Gee! Ye have let me run on, gabbin'.

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

I like to listen to you. I'm glad to think you are happy—sometimes. *I* am the most *unhappy* woman in this city tonight.

JENNY

[*Wide-eyed.*] *Are* ye?

MRS. CRYSTAL-POLE

Wretched.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

Why?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I have nothing to sit up at night for and plan. I've no father to seek. I know where he is. And I don't love him. I'm wretched because I've everything I *don't* want and nothing I *do*.

JENNY

What do ye want *most*, lady?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

What every human being does — happiness.

JENNY

[*Thoughtfully.*] I know. Things to go your way, an' when they don't, it jolts ye. I know that. [*Brightening.*] But I always feel if ye don't get it *one* way ye do another. If I'd lost this place, I might have got a better one. It's all in the day. So what's the use of worryin'? Seems to me the best thing is to go right on.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

We've got to do that — *go right on*.

JENNY

Do ye know what I think happiness is *really*? — *Lookin' forward!*

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

That's all it is. *Looking forward*. And I've nothing to look forward *to*.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

You're jokin'! Ain't ye?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No.

JENNY

Why, what are all the fine people goin' to say when they see ye in that dress? Eh? [*Laughs.*] They'll cry their eyes out with envy — that they will. Won't *that* make ye happy?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Not in the least.

JENNY

My, but you're queer. That's all our customers think about — what the *other* people'll think. I know *I'd* like to have fine things if only to see what the others did when they caught me in them. How they'd look! "*Shabby Jenny*" they calls me. They'd open their eyes if they ever saw me "dolloed up."

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

And would *that* make you happy?

JENNY

For a bit. They don't give me much chance — the girls at the shop. Cruel, some of 'em. Laugh at me. Think I'm queer. An' they say father ran away from mother an' me. An' they don't blame him. They say anyone would run away from me an' mother an' Brook-

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lyn. 'Course it hurts at the time. But I don't really mind it. They don't know what I'm *thinkin'*. Do they? That's what mother an' me always comforts ourselves with. Yer *thoughts* are yer own. I've got to stand about an' run about from eight to six, an' do what they tell me, but they don't know what I'm *thinkin'* all the time. Why, ye can be a *queen* — in yer mind in a four-dollar dress an' a cheap hat. An' some queens can't be as happy — that's what mother says.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

What recreations have you?

JENNY

Recreation? Holiday?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Yes.

JENNY

Oh, *Sunday*. That's a *great* day. I don't get up till nine o'clock Sunday mornings. *Nine o'clock!* An' we always have chicken and cake for dinner. *Always* — chicken and cake. An' when mother's had a good week, we go to a movin'-picture show in the evenin'. Not the cheap ones. We don't like them. Why, all the girls in them that only got six dollars a week went wrong. An' ye should see the fellows they went wrong with! Bald heads an' fat stomachs! Silly, *I* call 'em. I want to tell you the girls at the store are not that kind at all. They're very particular who they go out with. Them kind of pictures are no good. We like the ones about

HAPPINESS

travelin' an' huntin' an' the coronation — you know — all them funny people in uniforms. We love them. They're so educatin'. [*Stops to take breath; suddenly bursts out again as a new thought comes to her.*] Oh! An' I'm learnin' French, too!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

French?

JENNY

There's a French woman at the store I do things for's teachin' me. She says I'll learn it quicker than I will good English, 'cause me ear ain't spoilt. Oh, I mustn't complain. There's an awful lot to do, if ye take the trouble to find out.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I suppose there is. I wish *I'd* started like you; with your outlook.

JENNY

[*Laughs shyly.*] Oh, don't be silly.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Then I wouldn't be looking back all the time. I'd be pressing forward. [*Looks at JENNY intently; then puts both hands on JENNY's shoulders.*] I'd like to have some one like you near me — just now.

JENNY

What for? To laugh at?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No. As a ballast.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

As a what? [*Laughs.*] I don't know what you mean, lady.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I'm at a loose end. I'm rattled. I'm out of touch with myself and the world. I want to plan things! To look ahead; to have faith in life. An hour ago I had nothing to look forward to — nothing. You've roused me. If *you* can be happy with *nothing* why shouldn't *I* be with everything?

JENNY

What are ye drivin' at, lady?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Help me, and I'll help *you*. Give me of your *enthusiasm* — your *faith* — your *philosophy*. You seem to see light where I find only darkness; beauty, where I know only the hateful; the wonderful that to me is but the ordinary. Help me to become a useful, human creature, and I'll help you.

JENNY

But what do you want me to do?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Give me of your courage, your truth, your loyalty and your resolution. Will you?

JENNY

I'd have to ask mother first.

HAPPINESS

[*Enter CHANDOS in evening dress. Both of the women rise, JENNY draws back, watching them wonderingly.*]

CHANDOS

[*Advances to MRS. POLE, looking in admiration at the dress.*] Wonderful!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Is it?

CHANDOS

Marvellous!

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Rags, my dear Phil. Just rags.

CHANDOS

Their setting is magnificent. Shall we start?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Where?

CHANDOS

To my "farewell dinner."

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

No. I'll dine here.

CHANDOS

Why?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Oh, I don't know. [*Touches her forehead.*] Things have all changed *here*. What a rotter I've been! What

HAPPINESS

a rotter! [*Suddenly to JENNY.*] Will you stay and dine with me?

JENNY

[*Confusedly.*] Thank ye, lady. I can't.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Why not?

JENNY

Mother'll be waitin'.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Can't you stay out for once?

JENNY

[*Hurriedly.*] Oh, no! I couldn't do that. She's all alone.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Don't you *ever* stay out?

JENNY

No. She's all alone.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Send for her.

JENNY

It would take too long. Besides, she mightn't like it.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Do as I tell you. Write her address. *I'll* send for her.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

But suppose she won't come? She's very proud, is mother.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

She'd come for you?

JENNY

Oh, anywhere.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Indicating desk.*] Sit down there and write her that you want her to come. [*Pause.*] Do it.

JENNY

[*Hesitates; then goes to the desk, sits and writes, protesting as she goes.*] But she may not come.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*To CHANDOS.*] Will you stay?

CHANDOS

With pleasure.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Do you mind sitting at the same table with that girl and her mother?

CHANDOS

Why, of course not; but I thought —

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Goes to telephone.*] Wait. Hello. Give me the restaurant. [*Pause.*] Is that the restaurant? [*Pause.*] I want the head-waiter. [*Pause.*] Head-waiter? This

HAPPINESS

is Mrs. Pole. Apartment 512. Serve dinner up here in three-quarters of an hour for four. [*Pause.*] I leave it to you.

CHANDOS

[*Protestingly.*] Don't leave it to a head-waiter —

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Sssh! [*Silences CHANDOS, then talks into the telephone.*] Yes. Anything will do. Anything at all.

CHANDOS

[*Indignantly.*] *Anything!* My farewell —

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Stops him again.*] And listen — I say, listen. Ask them to send someone up at once. Yes, at once. Thank you. [*Hangs up receiver. To JENNY.*] Is it finished?

JENNY

[*Licking the flap of the envelope.*] Yes, lady. But I don't know what mother'll say.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Give it me! [*Takes the letter and reads the address.*] "Mrs. Wray."

JENNY

That's mother.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*To CHANDOS, introducing them.*] This is Miss Wray — Mr. Chandos. [*CHANDOS bows smilingly.*]

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*Holds her hand out timidly.*] Jenny's my name.

CHANDOS

Glad to meet you.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

May I use your car?

CHANDOS

Certainly.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I'll send this. [*Goes out.*]

JENNY

[*Surreptitiously takes out an old cheaply-framed daguerreotype, rubs it and looks at it, then at CHANDOS.*]

What did you say your name is?

CHANDOS

[*Looks at her amusedly.*] Chandos.

JENNY

Sure?

CHANDOS

Quite.

JENNY

Did you ever live in Brooklyn?

CHANDOS

Never.

HAPPINESS

JENNY

Oh!

CHANDOS

Why?

JENNY

You look awfully like he did — only yer dressed different.

CHANDOS

Like whom?

JENNY

My father.

CHANDOS

Really? [*Laughs.*]

JENNY

I'm sure mother'll ask ye if she comes. [*Sits down, looking at the photo.*]

[*Enter* MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE. CHANDOS, *suppressing his laughter, walks over to* MRS. POLE.]

JENNY

[*Touches* CHANDOS's arm *as he passes her.*] Are ye sure ye never lived in Brooklyn?

CHANDOS

[*First looks at her, then moves to* MRS. POLE.] Who is she?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

She's come out of nowhere to us.

HAPPINESS

CHANDOS

[*In amazement.*] *Us?*

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

You and me.

CHANDOS

What for?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

To help us to look forward. [*Goes to JENNY.*]
Come, take off your coat and your hat and your gloves.
[*Assists her with them.*]

JENNY

It's nice of you to ask us. But I don't think we
should — really —

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Why not?

JENNY

Like this? [*Points to her shabby dress.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

What does that matter? Remember, you have your
thoughts.

JENNY

Yes, lady. [*Takes off coat. MRS. POLE puts coat on
table. JENNY hands MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE her hat.*]

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Is it a bargain?

HAPPINESS

JENNY

[*Laughs cheerfully and touches the shabby little hat.*]
Yes, it was. How did you know?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

I mean, will you help me — and let me help you?

JENNY

I'd like to.

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

[*Presses her down onto the couch into a comfortable position, then goes to CHANDOS.*] If there were more like *her*, there would be fewer like *us*.

CHANDOS

Why?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

She's a real human being. She's found what we've never known.

CHANDOS

Yes?

MRS. CHRYSTAL-POLE

Happiness.

JENNY

[*Nervously locking and unlocking her fingers, a worried look in her eyes, a tremor running through her thin little body, murmurs under her breath.*] I wonder if mother will come?

JUST AS WELL

WRITTEN IN 1898

REVISED FOR PRODUCTION, 1914

CHARACTERS

HON. DOLEEN SWEETMARCH MAID

MRS. CARFAX

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

SCENE

*Morning-room at Lady Sweetmarch's.
Mayfair. London.*

JUST AS WELL

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY ROMANCE

[*The action of the Romance passes in the Morning-room of Lady Sweetmarch's Town-house in Mayfair.*

It is on the first floor, and through the open windows can be seen the budding trees of the adjacent gardens, in from which comes the warm breath of late Spring. It is a handsomely-furnished room, made still more attractive by the addition of many open cases of jewelry, rare vases, pottery, porcelain, an Indian shawl and huge masses of flowers. Lending a somewhat commonplace note to the otherwise brilliant atmosphere, in prominent positions are a large soup-tureen with a ladle, a velvet receptacle containing numerous silver salt-cellars, and a quantity of knives and forks. Cards, lying on or attached to the various and numerous articles denote that they are offerings from well-wishing friends.

The MAID ushers in MRS. CARFAX, a gentle, kindly, spirituelle lady of fifty. She is carrying a somewhat bulky parcel very tenderly and devotionally.

MAID

Miss Sweetmarch has just come in from the Park.
I'll tell her.

JUST AS WELL

MRS. CARFAX

The wedding is on Friday — is it not?

MAID

Yes, Madam.

MRS. CARFAX

[*Gives a little sigh. She then holds out the package to the MAID.*] Kindly unwrap it.

MAID

[*Undoes the wrappings and discloses two large, soberly-bound volumes.*]

MRS. CARFAX

[*Indicating a small table.*] Here, please.

[*The MAID places the books carefully on the table, goes to the door and opens it. She steps back to make way for MISS DOLEEN SWEETMARCH, who enters at that moment. The MAID goes out, closing the door noiselessly behind her. DOLEEN walks straight into the room and greets MRS. CARFAX enthusiastically. She is a slight, fair, impressionable young lady of twenty-six; is attired in a modish riding-habit, and has a number of open letters in her hand. Her cheeks are flushed from the morning-ride, and her eyes dance with the happiness born of health. She is radiant. She speaks with the most adorable lisp, turning her "r's" into "w's," and sounding the letter "s" as though it were "th," and has a straightforward, child-like, naïve manner that goes straight to one's heart.*]

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

[*Giving a cry of delight, embraces Mrs. CARFAX exuberantly and kisses her on both cheeks.*] Dear Mrs. Carfax. How sweet of you to come.

MRS. CARFAX

[*Her eyes filling.*] Oh, my poor child!

DOLEEN

Don't cry. Please don't cry.

MRS. CARFAX

I can't help it, Doleen. I can't help it. It will soon be over. It is with happiness, dear — just happiness — for your sake. I am glad — most glad — that you have won the love of an honorable man.

DOLEEN

Isn't it splendid — just too splendid.

MRS. CARFAX

It is very unexpected.

DOLEEN

That's what everyone says.

MRS. CARFAX

You are most fortunate. I sincerely hope your marriage will not be a mistake. So many are.

DOLEEN

Aren't they?

JUST AS WELL

MRS. CARFAX

Here, dear. [*She takes up the two big books.*]

DOLEEN

Are they for me?

MRS. CARFAX

Yes. Dean Hole's sermons.

DOLEEN

Oh, how lovely.

MRS. CARFAX

They are most satisfying. Take them with you on your honeymoon and read them constantly. I do want you to try and realize the responsibility of the path in life you have chosen. It is full of pitfalls.

DOLEEN

[*Turning the pages.*] I'll just love these. It is so sweet of you to bring them. I adore sermons.

MRS. CARFAX

Come and see me directly you return, won't you.

DOLEEN

The first minute I'm back — really.

MRS. CARFAX

[*Cries.*] I do hope you will be happy. But it is a great risk.

DOLEEN

I've not taken it yet. So don't cry, Mrs. Carfax. Just listen to this. [*Reads one of the open letters.*]

JUST AS WELL

"Good old Do. So it's all right, eh? Jolly glad. Best of luck, old girl. You'll have to tighten the rein a bit, now. Trawbridge has a hard mouth. You had better ride him on the curb." Isn't the bracelet a dear? [*DOLEEN shows it to MRS. CARFAX and kisses it.*] "Tons of kisses. Yours to a turn. Gyp." We were at school together, you know. I rather thought she wanted Trawbridge herself, poor dear. Isn't it a sweet letter?

MRS. CARFAX

[*Severely.*] A very flipant, worldly letter.

DOLEEN

Oh, she's very worldly. Very. But isn't it a pretty bracelet? What does she mean, "ride Trawbridge on the curb"? I think that's horrid. Oh, you must hear this one. [*Reads another.*] "Dear Miss Sweetmarch. I have just heard the news of your approaching marriage. I need hardly say how surprised I am — how shocked I am" — [*breaks off*]. No, that isn't the one. That's from poor old Clifford. He thought I was in love with him. Poor old silly. [*Takes up a pearl cross.*] Nice of him to send me that, wasn't it? The stupid boy, of course I wasn't in earnest and he ought to have known it.

MRS. CARFAX

You understand, Doleen, you must never flirt again.

DOLEEN

I should think not. This is from my brother. He's

JUST AS WELL

a little rascal himself. [*Reads.*] "Dearest Sid. You *have* taken a rise out of us all. Fancy old Trawbridge! Didn't think he had it in him. Never mind, he's all right. Give him a chance, won't you? I am sending you the biggest tureen I can find. You are bound to fall in the soup." It sounds disgustingly vulgar. "The ladle is to match. Your loving brother, Freddie." Don't like that at all. Isn't this beautiful? [*Shows jewel-case.*] From Colonel Crawford. He's to be the best man. [*Picks up another case.*] Oh, what a duck! [*Runs across to mirror and fastens it on. Hurries back to table and sees the other cases.*] Knives. Why do people send knives? Silly things. Salt cellars. Twelve of them. Isn't it ridiculous? One would think we were going to live on salt. [*Suddenly.*] Oh, Mrs. Carfax, I ought not to keep them. I won't keep them. I must send them back. I *will* send them back.

MRS. CARFAX

What for?

DOLEEN

Because I don't love him. I don't love him. I know now I never *did* love him.

MRS. CARFAX

Then why did you become engaged?

DOLEEN

I don't know. I didn't *ask* him to marry me. I don't think he ever asked me. Only people talked about us

JUST AS WELL

— and I let him talk to me — and now they've sent all these. Isn't it awful?

MRS. CARFAX

If you don't love him, you must not marry him.

DOLEEN

I won't. I'm sure I could never make him happy. He's so fussy. And so serious. And I *think* I love someone else. Claude Plumleigh. I think I do. He's so jolly. And he has five thousand a year, a shooting-box, a yacht, and an uncle worth a million. Of course, that isn't the reason.

MRS. CARFAX

Doleen —

DOLEEN

Poor Trawbridge. He's only got his pay and his father's allowance, which isn't much. When his father dies, of course, he'll be quite well off. But then the General may live to a hundred, poor man, and we'd be so shabby, waiting. No. I'm sure it's for the best. Claude's a real chance. And I'm really fond of him — at least I think I am.

MRS. CARFAX

There must be no doubt before marriage, Doleen.

DOLEEN

I should think not.

MRS. CARFAX

Marriage, my dear, is like an egg.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

An egg?

MRS. CARFAX

If there is *any* doubt, there is *no* doubt.

DOLEEN

You mean a *rotten* egg!

MRS. CARFAX

And an unhappy marriage.

DOLEEN

Oh, I *must* break it off. But it does seem a shame to send all these beautiful things back. I wonder if I could keep — no, nothing. If I marry Claude, they can send them all to me again. [*She runs from one to the other, touching some of them longingly, some caressingly, picks up the shawl and reads from the card attached.*] “From General Sir Cholmondeley Trawbridge. Jullundur, Punjaub, India. My sincerest wishes for your happiness.” [*Puts shawl on.*] He must be a dear old thing, but he has lived a long time.

MRS. CARFAX

Does Captain Trawbridge know you do not care for him?

DOLEEN

Not in the least. He doesn't even suspect it.

MRS. CARFAX

And he loves you?

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

He's perfectly mad about me.

MRS. CARFAX

You must not let it go on any longer. You must break it off at once.

DOLEEN

I am so glad you think that, too. The moment he comes in I'll just rush at him and get it over. Poor old Hastings. I wish he didn't stammer. It's so silly. And he always stammers in the wrong place. [*Ring heard faintly in the distance. Excitedly.*] There he is. It's just his time. He calls every morning at 11:30, as if it were parade. I do hope he won't make a scene. I can't help it if he does. Won't you stay and help me?

MRS. CARFAX

No, I will not.

DOLEEN

Oh, please! It would be so nice to have *you* tell him.

MRS. CARFAX

You must learn to take the responsibility of your own acts. Such a marriage without love would have been terrible.

DOLEEN

[*Embracing her.*] I knew you'd stand by me, you angel.

[*Enter MAID.*]

JUST AS WELL

MAID

Captain Trawbridge.

DOLEEN

In here.

MRS. CARFAX

Wait, I'll go.

DOLEEN

Do please help me to break it to him —

MRS. CARFAX

[*Draws herself up.*] Remember, it is your duty. Follow it.

DOLEEN

Don't fear, dear Mrs. Carfax.

MRS. CARFAX

I will pray for you tonight.

DOLEEN

That will be sweet of you.

[MRS. CARFAX passes out with MAID. DOLEEN sits at piano and plays and sings. Enter CAPTAIN HASTINGS TRAWBRIDGE, a smart, well-groomed officer, very fashionably dressed, deliberate of speech except when excited, then he stammers; he is very serious and somewhat miserable. He advances slowly into the room and stands looking mournfully at the presents. DOLEEN stops singing, but continues to play.]

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

He's there. I can feel him all down my spine.
[*Shivers.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Turning round from presents.*] Doleen.

DOLEEN

[*Starting up.*] Oh!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Good-morning.

DOLEEN

You are early?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Think not. [*Opens watch.*] 11:30. Thought so.
How are you?

DOLEEN

Very fit. How are *you*?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Jolly. [*Sighs heavily.*] Is Lady Sweetmarch in?

DOLEEN

No. They have all gone to Tate's.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Q-q-quite alone?

DOLEEN

Quite.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No one likely to disturb us?

DOLEEN

No one.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Glad. [*Looking at presents.*] More of 'em?

DOLEEN

Yes. Twenty since yesterday.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Gloomily.*] On Friday!

DOLEEN

Er — yes — Hastings — on Friday — that is if —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Awfully near!

DOLEEN

Isn't it? Do you know, I —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

S-s-serious b-b-business, isn't it?

DOLEEN

What is?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Friday's.

DOLEEN

Oh, yes; ha, ha! [*Laughs nervously.*] But —

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Thought it well out? [*Looks at her anxiously.*]

DOLEEN

[*Jumping at the opportunity.*] Yes, Hastings, I have, and I have come to the conclusion —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Must go on with it? Thought as much. [*Sighs.*]

DOLEEN

Well, really, ha, ha! [*Laughs.*] As a matter of fact I was going to — [*A little nearer to him.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I know, I know. It's dreadful. So near, too.

DOLEEN

Yes, but what I was going to say was —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Don't let us talk about it. [*Picking up jewel-case.*]

DOLEEN

[*Growing excited.*] But I must. Hastings, I can't —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I say, they're j-j-jolly. [*Holding up a diamond spray.*]

DOLEEN

Aren't they? Er — but I —

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Tried them on?

DOLEEN

I have. Fancy, Hastings —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Look r-r-ripping at n-night. Wouldn't they?

DOLEEN

Ha, ha! Wouldn't they? [*Puts her hand on his shoulder.*] Hastings — just now —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Takes up another case.*] That's a rum thing. Got no beginning or end to it.

DOLEEN

[*Seizes his left hand.*] Hastings, when you spoke about Friday just now, a new light seemed to dawn upon me.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Disengages himself.*] Did it? Never mind. It may be all for the best. [*Picks up a package.*] What are these?

DOLEEN

[*Angrily.*] Oh! [*Turns away.*] They're fire-irons!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I d-don't think much of them. [*Holding them up, opened out.*]

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

[*Quite sweetly, with an entire change of manner.*]
They're from dear Uncle Harry. He sent a cheque as well.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Oh? How much?

DOLEEN

Five hundred.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

That's useful.

DOLEEN

Wasn't it sweet of him? And your father sent a shawl. [*Hunts about for it.*] I *must* show it to you. [*Finds it.*] Isn't that too sweet?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I thought the gov'nor would send a shawl.

DOLEEN

That's all he *did* send.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Ah!

DOLEEN

How old is he, *dear*?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Sixty.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Very healthy, isn't he?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Grows younger every day.

DOLEEN

[*Trying to get back.*] Do you know, Hastings dear, that a couple engaged as we are —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Engaged — Gad!

DOLEEN

On the brink of marriage —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Three more days.

DOLEEN

— are placed in a terrible position —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Awful.

DOLEEN

And it was for that very reason that I am going to —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Yes, I know.

DOLEEN

But you *don't* know. [*Growing angry again.*]

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I d-d-do — only too well. [*Takes up the two large books.*]

DOLEEN

What?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Sermons! By Jove! These are ripping!

DOLEEN

Aren't they?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Opens volume; reads.*] “The thorny path of duty.”
Duty! [*Looks at DOLEEN.*] The thorny path!
[*Braces himself.*] I'll t-t-tread it.

DOLEEN

[*Breaks into a merry laugh.*] Fancy, Hastings, ha,
ha, ha —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Solemnly.*] I say, don't laugh!

DOLEEN

Oh, but I must. It's the funniest thing in the world
— ha, ha, ha!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*His arms full of the books.*] D-don't! I c-c-can't
bear it.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Do put the sermons down and listen. You must know — ha, ha, ha! I really can't help laughing, but I have just found out — it really is too funny, ha, ha, ha! — that you and I are not a bit —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Doleen! [*Solemnly.*]

DOLEEN

[*Stops laughing.*] Hastings.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Holding books out at arm's length in entreaty.*] You must return them.

DOLEEN

[*In amazement.*] The sermons?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Everything.

DOLEEN

[*Still more amazed.*] Everything?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Y-y-yes. It's our d-d-duty.

DOLEEN

I don't understand.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

It's b-b-better you never should.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Really, Hastings —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

It is dreadful.

DOLEEN

Why, what has happened?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Growing excited.*] It c-c-can't be. The f-f-fact is, I'm a fool. [*Drops one of the books; picks it up.*] I m-m-mean I've b-b-been a f-f-fool. [*Drops the other.*] D-d-damn! I beg your pardon.

DOLEEN

What do you mean?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Replaces the books on the table and walks toward* DOLEEN.] Doleen! I c-c-can't m-marry you on F-F-Friday.

DOLEEN

You can't marry me on *Friday*?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No.

DOLEEN

Then, when can you marry me?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

N-Never.

JUST AS WELL

[DOLEEN *sits in mingled amazement, amusement, joy and vexation.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I know I'm a b-b-brute. I ought to be h-h-horse-whipped. I d-d-deserve it. But it is n-not my f-fault.

DOLEEN

Then whose fault is it?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

It is fate.

DOLEEN

Oh! [*Moves angrily up and down the room.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

D-D-Doleen, I love someone else.

DOLEEN

Oh! *Do* you?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I knew it would b-b-break your heart —

DOLEEN

Break my — *well!*

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

But it is b-better, yes, f-far b-better, to realize c-c-calmly and s-s-soberly that a great gulf has c-c-come between us — d-d-darling!

DOLEEN

Darling!

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I mean, a g-g-great g-g-gulf.

DOLEEN

Who *is* she?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

An a-angel.

DOLEEN

Oh!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

If y-you c-c-could only s-see her.

DOLEEN

Captain Trawbridge, I think you have behaved disgracefully.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I h-have.

DOLEEN

Abominably.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

She is awfully y-young.

DOLEEN

Indeed! [*Twisting her handkerchief and tapping the floor with her boot.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Awfully innocent.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Really.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Awfully f-f-fair.

DOLEEN

Don't be absurd.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

To spare you a moment's pain —

DOLEEN

[*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I know how you must suffer —

DOLEEN

Captain Trawbridge, let us quite understand each other. This *gulf* that has opened between us is quite the most welcome thing that could have happened.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Eh?

DOLEEN

So far from breaking my heart, or, indeed, causing me a moment's pain, it is the one thing that I most desired.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Eh? What? You d-d-didn't w-wish to m-m-marry me?

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Not in the least.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And you don't want to now?

DOLEEN

Certainly not.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

N-never?

DOLEEN

Never.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Then it's all right?

DOLEEN

Quite all right.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Delighted.*] By George! That's splendid! Ha, ha, ha!

DOLEEN

Quite a relief, isn't it?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Why didn't you tell me before?

DOLEEN

You didn't give me a chance.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You were going to, just now?

DOLEEN

Yes, but you would interrupt me.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Fancy that.

DOLEEN

Odd, wasn't it?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Wasn't it? [*Laughs. DOLEEN looks at him and laughs, they laugh together a moment.*] Someone else, eh?

DOLEEN

Yes.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Good chap?

DOLEEN

A pet!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Disappointedly.*] Oh — really! I mean to say — I'm delighted. Oh, well, I must be going.

DOLEEN

To the — other one?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Yes.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

The Park?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No, Hurlingham.

DOLEEN

To lunch?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Yes.

DOLEEN

So are we!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Oh! By George! I think *we* will go somewhere else.

DOLEEN

It *would* be better.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well, good-bye. [*Holds out his hand.*]

DOLEEN

Good-bye. [*Arms folded, ignores his hand.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

See s-something of you, sometimes.

DOLEEN

I dare say.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Turns to go; stops, points to table.*] Oh! What about these? [*Indicating presents.*]

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

They shall go back tonight.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Pity, isn't it?

DOLEEN

Think so?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Still, it's all for the best. Good-bye.

DOLEEN

Good-bye.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I hope you'll be happy.

DOLEEN

Thanks.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Do I know him — in any way?

DOLEEN

I shouldn't think so.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No, no; of course not. Quite so. Is his *name* familiar?

DOLEEN

Not in the least.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No, no! Certainly not. [*Goes to door.*] Well, good-bye.

DOLEEN

[*Calling.*] Hastings! [CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE *turns.*] Have I met the "angel"?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

She's never mentioned you.

DOLEEN

What did you say her name was?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I d-don't think I mentioned it.

DOLEEN

Oh, I'm not in the least curious.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Pauses, comes down a step.*] She's only eighteen.

DOLEEN

[*Laughs cattily.*] A mere child.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I don't know. She's a *woman* in *some* ways.

DOLEEN

Fair, I think you said?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

As a r-r-rose.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Known her long?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

A w-w-week.

DOLEEN

Ha, ha! You haven't wasted time.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

N-not much.

DOLEEN

And you are going to marry her?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

That will be my privilege.

DOLEEN

When?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well — er — I mean to say — a bit long, you know.
In f-f-four years.

DOLEEN

[*Laughing.*] Four years!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Her mother's wish. Long time, eh?

DOLEEN

[*Laughing immoderately.*] You are stupid.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Nothing to laugh at.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

[*Hysterically.*] Oh, don't!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Ha, ha! Quite so! Quite so! [*Suddenly.*] By George, *she's* divine.

DOLEEN

[*Indignantly.*] You said *I* was once.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Did I?

DOLEEN

Oh, I'm surprised, disgusted.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Yes, b-l-but I say, what about yourself?

DOLEEN

That's different — *he's a man.*

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I don't see there's much difference.

DOLEEN

He knows his own mind.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Glad to hear it. Engaged?

DOLEEN

Yes.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well, you know —! What? Fixed the day?

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Next month.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Next —? I s-s-say, *you* haven't l-lost much time either, eh?

DOLEEN

Why should I?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Quite right. Why should you? Well, I'm j-jolly glad.

DOLEEN

Glad?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

F-for *your* s-sake.

DOLEEN

Oh!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You d-d-deserve a b-better man than me.

DOLEEN

I know that.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And I'm sure you ought to be v-very happy.

DOLEEN

I mean to be.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

D-D-Doleen — d-don't you think it is all for the b-best?

DOLEEN

My meeting Claude?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And my meeting Clara?

DOLEEN

Yes, I suppose it's just as well.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

D-don't you think we might still be friends?

DOLEEN

Why, of course; and, Hastings, you can always look upon me as a sister.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I shall be proud to. [*Looks at her admiringly for a moment.*] You were v-very f-fond of me once, weren't you?

DOLEEN

Was I?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And I was d-devoted to you. [*Near to her.*]

DOLEEN

Were you?

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Holding out his hand.*] Miss Sweetmarch!

DOLEEN

[*Taking his hand.*] Captain Trawbridge!

[*They stand together for a moment, then she moves away; he goes quietly to the door.*]

DOLEEN

[*Without turning round.*] Hastings! [TRAUBRIDGE stops.] Would you like to see his photograph? You may, if you like.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Think it necessary?

DOLEEN

I'm sure you would be such good friends. [*Taking up photo-frame from mantel-piece.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Would you like to see hers? [*Puts his hand in the breast pocket of his coat, searching for it.*]

DOLEEN

I'm not interested in the least.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Taking out the picture.*] To know her is to worship her. [*Looking intently at it.*]

DOLEEN

[*Looking at framed photo.*] He's a dear old thing.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

There! [*Handing photo to DOLEEN.*]

DOLEEN

There! [*Handing photo to TRAWBRIDGE. They both look at photos and burst into laughter.*]

DOLEEN

Clara Catchpole! Ha, ha, ha!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Claude Plumleigh! Ha, ha, ha!

DOLEEN

Fancy falling in love with Clara! Oh, this is too funny. [*Sinks onto chair, laughing loudly.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Funny? N-not half so funny as you liking this old idiot.

DOLEEN

[*Seriously.*] Idiot!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

C-Claude's a shocking ass.

DOLEEN

Captain Trawbridge, he is my future husband.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You're joking!

DOLEEN

I never joke.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well, Claude's no joke.

DOLEEN

He's one of the dearest men in the world.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I can quite believe that. He cost me a bit when I knew him.

DOLEEN

And please remember that anything you say against him reflects on me.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And [*looking at photograph*] you threw m-m-me over for this silly — for Claude!

DOLEEN

He is a man in a million.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I believe that.

DOLEEN

You needn't sneer, Captain Trawbridge!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Why, he hasn't t-two ideas in the w-world.

DOLEEN

He has five thousand pounds a year.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

How much? Five *hundred*.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

What do you know about it?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I ought to know something. My father was his t-t-trustee.

DOLEEN

And he has only five hundred a year?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

B-b-b-barely that.

DOLEEN

But he *will* have five thousand?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Glad to hear it. D-don't know where it's coming from.

DOLEEN

His uncle is enormously rich.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well?

DOLEEN

Well!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

That won't make any difference to Claude.

DOLEEN

He'll leave Claude everything.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Of course, if you know —

DOLEEN

Well, won't he?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

He wasn't going to, when I saw him last.

DOLEEN

Why not?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well, Claude's such a silly — I mean he's not quite — well, any way, he's *not*.

DOLEEN

But I don't understand. He told me distinctly —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Never believe a word he says.

DOLEEN

Do you mean to tell me Claude will not be his uncle's heir?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Won't leave him sixpence.

DOLEEN

Then why did he tell me?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Ah, *why*?

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Oh! [*Moves indignantly up and down the room; suddenly remembers.*] But he has a shooting-box in Scotland?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

First I've heard of it. Goes to his cousin's when he'll have him.

DOLEEN

He has a yacht! [*Growing more and more angry.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Has he?

DOLEEN

Hasn't he?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Of course, if you know —

DOLEEN

Has he or has he not?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Well, he *has*. Hires it — very cheap!

DOLEEN

Oh!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Looking at photo.*] By Jove, old c-chap, you c-c-can tell 'em.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

[*Almost in tears.*] But he's brilliantly clever.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Roars with laughter.*] Clever! Claude! Ha, ha, ha!

DOLEEN

He was Senior Wrangler at Cambridge!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

He was never at Cambridge in his life.

DOLEEN

He was never at Cambridge?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Except on a bicycle.

DOLEEN

But why did he tell me such stories?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

He must have been chaffing you.

DOLEEN

Then it was in the worst possible taste.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

He never had any taste.

DOLEEN

Captain Trawbridge!

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I beg your pardon.

DOLEEN

I'll never speak to him again. [*Her eyes flashing.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I thought it was fixed for next month?

DOLEEN

I wouldn't marry him if he were the only man in the world. Oh, it's monstrous.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

It's a beastly *shame*. I'll talk to him pretty straight.

DOLEEN

You'll do nothing of the kind. *I'll talk to him.*

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I thought you were never going to —

DOLEEN

Hold your tongue! [*Turns away.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I think I'll be going.

DOLEEN

[*Her back to him.*] Don't stay on my account.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Would you mind — [*Indicating photo in DOLEEN's hand.*]

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Eh? Oh! Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Clara? How old do you say she is?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Eighteen.

DOLEEN

[*Contemptuously.*] *Eighteen!*

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Next March.

DOLEEN

She's older than I am.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

That's nonsense.

DOLEEN

I ought to know. She was at school with me.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

That's nothing to do with it.

DOLEEN

Fair as a rose! [*Mockingly.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Figure of speech.

DOLEEN

She was auburn last year.

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

T-t-that is ch-ch-childish.

DOLEEN

Her proper colour is red — a horrid red, too.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Will you kindly give me that photograph?

DOLEEN

Let me see — who was she engaged to last?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I am the f-f-first man she has ever known.

DOLEEN

Oh, you would believe anything.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Holding out his hand for photograph.*] Will you kindly —

DOLEEN

I *know* — my brother Freddie. She threw him over for Falconer. She threw Falconer over for —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You are quite mistaken.

DOLEEN

Oh, there's no mistaking Clara.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No one like her in the world.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

I should think not. You little minx. [*Looking at photo.*] You'd be rather pretty, if you weren't freckled.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

They have a charm of their own.

DOLEEN

Pity you haven't a waist. [*Still looking at photo.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Will you be good enough —

DOLEEN

[*To TRAWBRIDGE.*] I'm sure I hope you'll be happy —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Will you —

DOLEEN

You deserve to be — you are so confiding. There! [*Gives him photo.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Thank you — good-bye.

DOLEEN

Good-bye.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You will tell Claude what you think of him.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

The wretch!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Sorry I had to disillusion you.

DOLEEN

I wish I could have said nice things about Clara, but she is really —

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Quite so, quite so. Good-morning. Good-bye.
[*Goes to door; thinks a moment, then goes deliberately down to DOLEEN.*] Doleen!

DOLEEN

Well?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I say — is she — is she really *red*?

DOLEEN

Yes!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Very red?

DOLEEN

A nasty, *ugly* red.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Shivers, thinks for a moment.*] And was she engaged to Freddie?

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

For six weeks.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You are not chaffing me?

DOLEEN

Captain Trawbridge, I never chaff.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Is she more than eighteen, too?

DOLEEN

Every minute of six-and-twenty.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Considering.*] I don't like her mother.

DOLEEN

A cat.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

She got me into it. [*Thinks.*] Serve 'em both right if I b-broke it off.

DOLEEN

It would indeed.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I've a good mind to.

DOLEEN

Why don't you?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Are *you* going to break with *Claude*?

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

I'll never see him again.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I thought you were going to —?

DOLEEN

I'll *write*.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Oh. I wonder if —

DOLEEN

Why shouldn't we —?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

You're a dear l-little thing.

DOLEEN

Aren't I? You're not half-bad!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

No. And after all everything is arranged.

DOLEEN

You have a good allowance, and India *is* unhealthy.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I think we might risk it.

DOLEEN

And then there are the presents.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Doleen.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Hastings.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I s-suppose you think me a b-brute.

DOLEEN

We all make mistakes.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Do you think you could ever forgive me?

DOLEEN

I could try.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I was very f-foolish, wasn't I?

DOLEEN

So was I, wasn't I?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And you think you could?

DOLEEN

Yes — if you would.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Will you try?

DOLEEN

[*Looking down.*] I *am* trying.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Taking her hand.*] Doleen.

JUST AS WELL

DOLEEN

Hastings. [*He kisses her hand.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I am awfully glad.

DOLEEN

So am I.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Sure?

DOLEEN

Yes. Are you?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Awfully glad.

DOLEEN

[*Gives a little contented sigh.*] Ah!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

[*Looks down at her.*] Rum things, girls. [*Considering.*]

DOLEEN

Hastings!

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE.

Thought I k-knew s-something about 'em.

DOLEEN

Don't you?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I do now.

JUST AS WELL.

DOLEEN

Do you?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Yes — I know now there is only one in the w-world worth having.

DOLEEN

Hastings, fancy! *Friday!* [*Laughing gleefully and girlishly.*]

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Yes — Friday.

DOLEEN

[*Imitating him.*] “Awfully near.”

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

J-jolly glad, now. I say — *we'll* go to Hurlingham!

DOLEEN

[*Clapping her hands.*] Oh, it would be lovely.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

And we'll drive through the Park first.

DOLEEN

It *will* be fun.

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Past *her* house —

DOLEEN

And *his* —

JUST AS WELL

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

We'll teach them a lesson —

DOLEEN

They won't forget. When will we start?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

At once. [*Taking up and fondling the presents.*] No need to send these back now?

DOLEEN

No. Isn't it splendid? [*Taking up jewels again, and trying them on.*] Hastie?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

Dolie?

DOLEEN

[*Looking in mirror admiringly.*] After all, I think it is just as well, don't you?

CAPTAIN TRAWBRIDGE

I'm sure it is just as well. [*Destroys the photographs of Clara and Claude.*]

DOLEEN

[*Sings.*] “There came a lover to a maid,
All on a summer's day!”

[*THE CURTAIN hides them from view.*]

THE DAY OF DUPES

WRITTEN IN 1897

REVISED FOR PRODUCTION, 1914

*" Oh, heart! Oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest,
Love is best! "*

THE CHARACTERS IN THE ALLEGORY

THE ARTIST

THE LITTÉRATEUR

THE POLITICIAN

THE ATTENDANT

THE FINANCIER

THE ' DUPE '

BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES, THE LIGHTS IN
THE THEATRE ARE LOWERED. CHIMES ARE
SOUNDED, SUMMONING THE AUDIENCE TO
THEIR SEATS. WHEN ALL IS STILL, FROM
BEHIND THE CURTAIN "PORTRAIT NO. 22"
FROM RUBINSTEIN'S "KAMMENOI OSTROW"
IS PLAYED ON STRINGS, INCLUDING 'CELLO,
HARP, VIOLA AND VIOLINS.

INDUCTION *spoken by THE 'DUPE' standing motionless
in front of a black velvet hanging. She is in com-
plete darkness save for a single ray of light stream-
ing on her pale, sorrowful face.*

I am the sprite
That reigns at night,
My body is fair for man's delight.
I leap and laugh
As the wine I quaff,
And I am the Queen of Astrofelle.

I curse and swear
In my demon-lair;
I shake wild sunbeams out of my hair.
I madden the old,
I gladden the bold,
And I am the Queen of Astrofelle.

Of churchyard stone
I have made my throne;
My locks are looped with a dead man's bone.
Mine eyes are red
With the tears I shed,
And I am the Queen of Astrofelle.

In cities and camps
I have lighted my lamps,
My kisses are caught by kings and tramps.
With rant and revel
My hair I dishevel,
And I am the Queen of Astrofelle.

THE DAY OF DUPES

My kisses are stains,
Mine arms are chains,
My forehead is fair and false like Cain's.
My gain is loss,
Mine honour is dross,—
And I am the Queen of Astrofelle!

From the Poems of the late Eric Mackay.

Published by James Pott and Company,
New York.



"THE DUPE"

THE DAY OF DUPES

The action passes in THE 'DUPE'S' Boudoir. It is a sombre room, draped in heavy black and green velvet. Everything is in perfect harmony of tone. The hangings, the tapestry, the furniture — all decorative yet subdued in effect. A few admirable pictures, a grand piano, two easels with unfinished paintings on them. A small, revolving, three-shelved book-case filled with rare volumes. A deeply-recessed fire-place in which a bright fire is blazing and over which stretches a massive, hooded mantel-piece. On the mantel-piece are a clock, miniatures, cameos, photographs, and one large, framed portrait between two small mirrors. A solid table on which are papers, magazines, a few books and two large bouquets. A lounge with a smaller bouquet lying on the cushions. A fourth bouquet is on the piano.

A cabinet on which are champagne — bottles, decanters, syphons, cigars and cigarette-cabinets and a tray with glasses, corkscrews and matches.

The atmosphere is one of Bohemianism and Dilettanteism.

When the curtain rises the room is quite empty.

THE ATTENDANT enters. She is a woman of about thirty-five: dark, sinister, mysterious. She has a

THE DAY OF DUPES

quick, penetrating look, and a hard, staccato utterance. She looks around the room sharply as if to satisfy herself it is unoccupied.

THE ATTENDANT

[Very quietly.] Walk in, sir.

[Enter THE POLITICIAN, a short, stout, florid man; bald, with a fringe of white hair at the back. He is in evening dress with a cloak over it. He wears an eye-glass which he toys with when speaking, fixes in his eye when interested. Orchid in button-hole. Genial and courtly manner.]

THE ATTENDANT

She won't be long, sir. She's dressing.

THE POLITICIAN

[Almost whispering.] Thanks, thank you. *[Walks to table, humming tune. Glances uneasily at THE ATTENDANT, who has gone to fireplace and is building up the fire. He picks up a paper — throws his cloak off.]*

THE ATTENDANT

[Going to him.] Let me take it, sir.

THE POLITICIAN

Thank you, thanks. *[THE ATTENDANT takes hat and cloak, places chair before fire.]*

THE ATTENDANT

Won't you sit by the fire? It's almost cold tonight. *[Goes up and places hat and cloak at back.]*

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE POLITICIAN

Quite chilly, quite chilly. [*Goes to fireplace and stretches out his hands to the flames.*] Will you — er — tell her I am here?

THE ATTENDANT

She knows. Heard you ring.

THE POLITICIAN

Ah! [*Handing her a coin — nodding pleasantly.*] Buy yourself something.

THE ATTENDANT

Thank you, sir.

THE POLITICIAN

Er — you never recognize people who call here?

THE ATTENDANT

Never!

THE POLITICIAN

Exactly.

THE ATTENDANT

A quiet tongue saves a deal of trouble. [*Going to door.*]

THE POLITICIAN

Quite right — quite right.

[*A woman's voice, singing, rises from the adjoining room. THE ATTENDANT pauses, listening. THE POLITICIAN, looking around, catches THE ATTEND-*

THE DAY OF DUPES

ANT'S eye. THE POLITICIAN *and* THE ATTENDANT
stand a second in the attitude of listening.]

THE POLITICIAN

[*With a pleased smile.*] Ah!

THE ATTENDANT

Her Birthday. See the flowers? [*Goes out.*]

THE POLITICIAN

[*Looking at flowers.*] My bouquet! [*Smells it.*]
Beautiful! Dear me, dear me! [*Puts it down — sees
another bouquet — takes it up.*] H'm! Another!
How distressing! Dear, dear. [*He places it on lower
shelf of the revolving book-case.*] Quite so — quite so!
[*Surveys his own bouquet, with satisfaction, turns to
mantel-piece, sees the framed portrait — takes it in his
hand.*] Oh dear, dear, dear — [*Turns his head
away.*] How dreadful. Shocking! How could — she
be photographed like that! How could she! [*Fixes
in eye-glass — examines it closely — gradually a pleased
smile comes across his face.*] Dear me! Wonderfully
like her! Superb woman — superb! All the same I
wish she wouldn't — [*Looking around.*] I wish she
wouldn't — ah! [*Goes to revolving book-case and
places photo on lower shelf, near the second bouquet.*]
That's better. Such a pity to have — er — *that* — in
so — prominent a position! Quite so — quite so! Dear
me! [*The clock strikes nine.*] Nine. I must be in
my seat by 10:30 tonight. The debate opens at eleven.
[*Stops before easel.*] Beautiful! Very beautiful!

THE DAY OF DUPES

Her own work too! [*Takes out notes, looks at them, then speaks from memory.*] “The man who gives his life wholly and solely to his country’s welfare — must be ready at any and at all times to — to — [*His eye falls on the bouquet resting on the lounge*] — to his country’s welfare —” [*Fixes his eyeglass, takes bouquet and examines it and reads card attached.*] Dear, dear — this is very unnecessary. I wish — she didn’t know quite — so — many — people — [*deposits it on second shelf of book-case, then resumes his speech*] “— to his country’s welfare — must be prepared at any and at all times to sacrifice his home, his kindred, the dearest wishes that bind him to — [*stares at bouquet on lid of piano*] — dearest wishes that —” Faugh! [*Examines card.*] Poetry! She has a large circle of — friends. A very large circle.

[*Enter THE ATTENDANT.*]

THE ATTENDANT

This way, sir.

THE POLITICIAN

[*Alarmed.*] Good gracious! Here is someone else. [*Throws bouquet under table and goes away from the line of sight of the door.*]

[*Enter THE FINANCIER, a tall, big built man, with a loud, coarse voice. Black, oily hair, whiskers and moustache. He is extravagantly dressed. In contrast to THE POLITICIAN he is blustering and assertive, the other quiet and diplomatic.*]

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE FINANCIER

[*Seeing THE POLITICIAN — turns away.*] I'll call again.

THE ATTENDANT

She particularly wants to see you, sir.

THE FINANCIER

Oh, does she? [*Glares at THE POLITICIAN.*]

THE POLITICIAN

[*To THE ATTENDANT, sidling up to door.*] I'll — I'll look in another time.

THE ATTENDANT

She wants to see *you*, too — sir, if you *don't* mind waiting. [*Places chair for THE FINANCIER.*] Won't you sit down, sir?

THE FINANCIER

All right.

THE POLITICIAN

How very awkward! Dear! Dear!

THE FINANCIER

Nice thing, this is!

THE ATTENDANT

[*Looks from one to the other, and goes quietly out.*]

THE FINANCIER

[*Examining THE POLITICIAN.*] Old fool!

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE POLITICIAN

[*Examines THE FINANCIER furtively.*] A very coarse looking person!

THE FINANCIER

Can't stand much of this!

THE POLITICIAN

I suppose I ought to say something!

THE FINANCIER

Makes a man look damn silly! [*To THE POLITICIAN.*] Good evening.

THE POLITICIAN

[*Nervously.*] Good evening.

THE FINANCIER

Warm!

THE POLITICIAN

Very.

THE FINANCIER

Staying long?

THE POLITICIAN

Oh, no! Just ran in for a moment.

THE FINANCIER

That's all right. Snug room.

THE POLITICIAN

Delightful!

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE FINANCIER

Her birthday. [*Takes up THE POLITICIAN'S bouquet.*]

THE POLITICIAN

Yes. I called to wish her happy returns.

THE FINANCIER

So did I.

[*Has been looking around the room — sees his own bouquet on shelf of book-case — takes it up, puts THE POLITICIAN'S bouquet in its place and his own in prominent position on the table. THE POLITICIAN watches him indignantly.*]

THE FINANCIER

That's better!

THE POLITICIAN

Dear, dear! I wish the fellow would go.

THE FINANCIER

[*Turning round suddenly.*] I had a good mind to cut and run when I saw you.

THE POLITICIAN

Really?

THE FINANCIER

Fact. *You* didn't look too comfortable.

THE POLITICIAN

I wasn't.

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE FINANCIER

[*Laughs.*] Ha! Ha!

THE POLITICIAN

[*Laughs.*] Ha! Ha!

BOTH

Ha! Ha! Ha! He! He! He!

THE FINANCIER

Glad to meet you. [*Holds out hand.*]

THE POLITICIAN

[*Feebly.*] Delighted! Delighted! [THE POLITICIAN and THE FINANCIER shake hands.]

[*Enter THE ATTENDANT.*]

THE ATTENDANT

Step inside, sir. [*The two men turn away and go out of sight of the door.*]

THE POLITICIAN

Another!

THE FINANCIER

I'm damned!

[*Enter THE LITTÉRATEUR. He is a spare man, with long hair — pointed beard — pince-nez — evening dress — white flower — low collar and flowing neck-tie. He has a soft, purring voice and keen, eager eyes.*]

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[*Looking at the two men, whose backs are toward him.*] I thought I would be alone.

THE ATTENDANT

It's all right — sir.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

It is *not* all right. I'll call tomorrow.

THE ATTENDANT

But she wants to see you *particularly*.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Eh?

THE ATTENDANT

Most particularly

[THE LITTÉRATEUR *looks indignantly at the two men's backs.*]

THE POLITICIAN

That's what she said to me.

THE FINANCIER

What's the little game — I wonder?

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Can I wait anywhere else?

THE ATTENDANT

No, sir. She won't be long. Sit down. [*Takes his hat and cane — puts them at back — turns — MEN all in position — ignoring each other — shrugs her shoul-*

THE DAY OF DUPES

ders with a little laugh. Goes to THE LITTÉRATEUR.]
Pity to miss her.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I'll wait!

THE ATTENDANT

[Glides silently to the door and goes out.]

THE POLITICIAN

It is really too bad!

THE FINANCIER

I'll give her a bit of my mind for this.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Exceedingly disagreeable. I wonder who they are.

THE FINANCIER

I've a good mind to chuck it.

THE POLITICIAN

I never felt so uncomfortable in all my life.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[Beaming on them, rubbing his hands together nervously.] Good evening, gentlemen. I regret that I should have disturbed you.

THE POLITICIAN

[Without looking round.] Not in the least.

THE FINANCIER

[Back still to him.] Haven't disturbed *me*.

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I had no idea there would be anyone here.

THE FINANCIER

Hadn't you?

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Not the slightest.

THE FINANCIER

Well, there *is* — someone here.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

So I perceive — I am afraid that I am an intruder.
[*Pause.*] I think it would be better perhaps if I were to go.

THE FINANCIER

Perhaps it would.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[*Explaining.*] It being her birthday —

THE FINANCIER

[*Turning round angrily.*] Well?

THE POLITICIAN

[*Anxious to conciliate.*] Er — we all called.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Exactly. However, these flowers have already heralded my good wishes. [*Raising THE FINANCIER'S bouquet from the table.*]

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE FINANCIER

Put that down!

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Eh?

THE FINANCIER

Put that bouquet down.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[*Glances at card, drops bouquet, rather alarmed.*]
There appears to be some little mistake. Gentlemen —
good-night. [*Hurriedly takes up his hat and coat.*]

[*THE POLITICIAN and THE FINANCIER exchange relieved glances. THE ATTENDANT enters.*]

THE ATTENDANT

In here, sir. Be careful.

[*THE FINANCIER and THE POLITICIAN recover their positions. THE LITTÉRATEUR goes hurriedly to fireplace. Enter THE ARTIST,—a fair, handsome, worn man. He is poorly dressed. He has a clear, earnest voice and a pathetic face. He looks in amazement at the three MEN.*]

THE POLITICIAN

It will be a solemn warning to me.

THE FINANCIER

I wonder how many more are coming.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

This promises to be interesting.

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THE ATTENDANT

[*To THE ARTIST.*] Take a seat, sir.

THE ARTIST

I would rather not, thank you. [*Moves in direction of door.*]

THE ATTENDANT

[*Stops him.*] She wants to see you, *most particularly.*

[*The three MEN exchange glances and turn away.*]

THE ARTIST

You are sure?

THE ATTENDANT

Quite.

THE ARTIST

[*Looking at the others.*] And yet —

THE ATTENDANT

[*Under her breath to THE ARTIST.*] Don't mind them, sir. She's just ready.

THE ARTIST

[*Hesitates, then makes up his mind.*] I'll stay.

THE ATTENDANT

[*Goes silently to door, looks mockingly at the four men and goes out.*]

THE FINANCIER

She's been making a fool of me.

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THE POLITICIAN

I would never have thought it of her.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I must not be recognized here.

THE FINANCIER

I'm off. [*Making a plunge for his hat and coat.*]

THE POLITICIAN

It is impossible to remain now — [*Goes for his hat and cloak.*]

THE LITTÉRATEUR

The risk is too great — [*Goes quickly for his hat and coat.*]

[*The three MEN meet at the table confusedly.*]

THE ARTIST

One moment, gentlemen. If anyone should go, surely it is I. I have only this moment arrived.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I was only a second before you.

THE FINANCIER

Well — so was I.

THE ARTIST

In that case we should withdraw in favour of *that* gentleman. [*Indicating THE POLITICIAN.*]

THE POLITICIAN

Dear me, no. Not at all, I assure you!

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THE FINANCIER

Can't understand why we've all come like this.

THE ARTIST

She *invited* me.

THE POLITICIAN

Er — she invited *me*.

THE FINANCIER

And me.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I certainly had an invitation.

THE ARTIST

Here is the letter.

THE POLITICIAN

Mine is destroyed.

THE FINANCIER

Burnt mine.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[*Searching for and finding the note.*] Here it is.

THE POLITICIAN

It is certainly a most unfortunate dilemma.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

It has a solution. We are all evidently invited by some misunderstanding, on the same evening. As we are not known to each other, and, I may add, under the

THE DAY OF DUPES

peculiar circumstances of our meeting, it is manifestly unfair for more than *one* to remain.

THE POLITICIAN

Quite so.

THE FINANCIER

That's what *I* think.

THE ARTIST

Certainly.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Let us draw lots who remains.

THE POLITICIAN

Draw lots?

THE ARTIST

By all means.

THE FINANCIER

That's fair enough.

THE POLITICIAN

Quite fair, quite fair.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Very well. There is no time to lose. [*Takes leaves out of pocket-book and proceeds to tear them into four square pieces.*]

THE POLITICIAN

Er — gentlemen — I presume our acquaintance ends here? I'm sure I need say no more? Eh?

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THE ARTIST

I understand.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Not another word.

THE FINANCIER

That's what *I* think.

THE POLITICIAN

Very good, very good indeed.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

There. [*Holds up three squares of paper.*] Please fold them. [THE ARTIST *folds papers.*] On this I will write—"Remain"! [*Writes in pencil on paper, folds it.*] There. A hat, please. [THE ARTIST *brings a hat—the papers are thrown into it and then they draw out one each.*]

[THE 'DUPE's' *voice heard singing from the adjoining room.*]

THE 'DUPE'

[*Singing.*]

"Lazy, laughing, languid Jenny,
Fond of a kiss, fond of a guinea." *

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Quickly. She is coming. [*They all open out pieces of paper.*] Blank!

* From "Jenny" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

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THE POLITICIAN

Blank!

THE FINANCIER

Blank!

THE ARTIST

"Remain."

THE POLITICIAN

Quite right, quite right. [*Goes quickly to door.*]

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Good night. [*Goes to door.*]

THE FINANCIER

Damn nonsense. [*Goes to door.*]

[THE 'DUPE'S' voice rises again. *They all turn and listen.*]

THE 'DUPE'

[*Singing.*]

"Destiny! Destiny! Why am I so dark?

I that have beauty and love to be fair.

Destiny! Destiny! Am I but a spark

Track'd under heaven in flames and despair?

Destiny! Destiny! Why am I desired

Thus like a poisonous fruit, deadly sweet?

Destiny! Destiny! Lo, my soul is tired;

Make me thy plaything no more, I entreat!" *

* From "The Shaving of Shagpat" by George Meredith.

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[*The curtains are drawn back, and standing in the centre, a hand on each curtain, is THE 'DUPE,' a beautiful woman, tall, dark, commanding. She is in evening dress, with flowers around her throat, in her breast and in a garland round her waist.*]

THE 'DUPE'

How sweet of you all to come! You have been waiting for me? How unusual! It is I who have always waited for you, eh? Well — have you nothing to say? I see. You do not know each other? You shall. [*Movement of alarm and protest by THE POLITICIAN, THE FINANCIER and THE LITTÉRATEUR. THE ARTIST stands staring at her.*] Come, be introduced. [*Moves down.*] Messieurs les — POLITICIAN, LITTÉRATEUR, FINANCIER — [*Indicates each, looking round, sees THE ARTIST.*] Ah, yes, and ARTIST. [*They bow stiffly to each other.*] No, no! Too cold. Shake hands, please. [*Laughs mirthlessly.*] You men are stupid. Come, Artist — give your hand to Literature. Politics, yours to Finance —

THE POLITICIAN

Might I suggest?

THE FINANCIER

Yes, I would like to know —

THE 'DUPE'

You wonder why I have brought you all together? It was indiscreet, eh?



"MANY HAPPY RETURNS"

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE POLITICIAN

It was certainly unwise.

THE FINANCIER

Simply ridiculous.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

It was hardly fair.

THE ARTIST

Perhaps —

THE ‘ DUPE ’

I have brought you all here tonight to bid me “good-bye”! This is our last meeting. Tomorrow we all go different ways, and we must never cross each other’s paths again.

THE POLITICIAN

How very distressing.

THE FINANCIER

Humbug!

THE LITTÉRATEUR

A most extraordinary person!

THE ‘ DUPE ’

[*Turning to* THE FINANCIER.] This is what you would call a meeting of directors to wind up a company. Debts must be paid today,—partnerships dissolved. But we must do it pleasantly. A little wine—a little seriousness, a little laughter, and then! Voila!—Go! Come, Financier, take the chair of the Board. [*She*

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places a chair for him.] Sit down, sir. [THE FINANCIER *sulkily drops into chair.*] Fellow directors, arrange yourselves. Politics — there. [*Indicates lounge.*] Littérateur in front of Finance, Artist in the centre. Good. A happy augury. Money helps; letters immortalize; the politician sometimes ennobles the artist. Sir : [to THE ARTIST], you are well placed.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Most happily expressed.

THE POLITICIAN

Admirably, quite admirably!

THE FINANCIER

[*Under his breath.*] Tom foolery!

THE ‘ DUPE ’

Now to business. First — smoke! Oh, you may! [To THE FINANCIER.] A Corona for you —. [*She selects one and examines it critically.*] There — try that — and do please look cheerful! Matches! [To THE LITTÉRATEUR.] Intimidation for the author. Say “thank you” and laugh. That’s better. And politics —

THE POLITICIAN

Not now — thanks very much, thank you.

THE ‘ DUPE ’

Ah — you debate tonight?

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THE POLITICIAN

Yes — most critical position.

THE ' DUPE '

What you politicians suffer. How grateful we should be! [*Turns away with a little laugh — to THE ARTIST.*] Artist, cigarette? [*Hands him one.*] I will join you. Now, wine. Who will help me? [*ALL rise.*] You open the bottles [*to THE FINANCIER and THE ARTIST*], you bring the tray. [*To THE LITTÉRATEUR.*] And you — [*To THE POLITICIAN.*]

THE POLITICIAN

[*In an undertone.*] Is it really goodbye?

THE ' DUPE '

Yes.

THE POLITICIAN

Anything serious?

THE ' DUPE '

Very!

THE POLITICIAN

If I can be of any assistance —

THE ' DUPE '

You shall be —

THE POLITICIAN

In any possible way —

THE ' DUPE '

There will be only one way —

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THE POLITICIAN

Er — a cheque —

THE ‘DUPE’

Yes — on your tongue — after tonight — that’s all!
[Laughs mockingly at him.]

THE POLITICIAN

Really, I am quite bewildered.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[Holding up glass.] Gentlemen, I feel I shall be only echoing the thought that is in all our minds at this moment in wishing our charming hostess — “many, many happy returns.” [They all drink to “many, many happy returns.”]

THE ‘DUPE’

[Bowing deeply.] I thank you from my heart. [She is standing — she motions the others to be seated.] And yet do I want many returns of today? And would they be happy? I wonder! And now before I dismiss you I am going to tell you a little story and preach you a little sermon. Is it not good? What do you say? You all look very stupid. Poor men! First you shall have the story — but you mustn’t laugh — it is serious — oh — very serious. Laugh! You will never laugh again to judge from the length of your faces now! [Laughs merrily — then suddenly stops and begins in an altered tone — sometimes leaning against the table — sometimes moving about — now addressing one — then another.] There was once a girl, oh, such a bright, happy, inno-

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cent girl! [*Turns to THE POLITICIAN.*] Innocent as your daughter in the convent—and as happy. But there came a great longing in her heart. She yearned to see the marvellous world that lay outside her prison bars; to catch a glimpse of the lands and of the peoples she dreamed of by night, and sighed for by day. And this longing grew until it became a fever that consumed her, that threatened to burn away her life. She was foolish, eh? Ah, yes! she was—very foolish. But then *we* are all foolish. And she, at least, had the excuse of *Youth*. One day someone came to her and offered her the key that would open her prison door, the golden key that meant liberty. But it was to be paid for. A price was on the key, as there is on everything, and the price for her freedom was the captivity of her heart. And she paid it. She gave her deliverer her young, trusting heart, and he took her away from the home she thought a prison and she saw the great world of beauty, and lived in the great world of love, and felt that happiness had nothing more to give.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

How wonderful is youth—golden youth!

THE ‘DUPE’

A beautiful story, is it not?

THE POLITICIAN

Delightful—quite delightful!

THE FINANCIER

Bosh! Sickly, sentimental bosh!

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE ' DUPE '

Artist? What do *you* say?

[THE ARTIST *moves away.*]

THE LITTÉRATEUR

And a very healthy lesson, too. Love the deliverer.
Very excellent.

THE ' DUPE '

Yes, but the story isn't finished.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Not finished?

THE ' DUPE '

No; the best part is to come.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Really?

THE POLITICIAN

Charming!

THE FINANCIER

Rot!

THE ' DUPE '

One day the deliverer, tired of his companion, went his way and left her alone. And then she found that she was more a prisoner than she ever had been in her home. She had now forged the chains herself that held her bound, and no one in all the world could ever break the chain that memory held together link by link. What

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did she do? Faced the world with a laughing face; hid away her sorrow; lived freely, carelessly, recklessly, but always with the chains around her heart, despair in her soul. And she made friends who took her away and showed her strange countries. Lands where the sun shone all night. Countries where music and painting found echoes in every street. Cities of pleasure, cities of grief — and the world glided by her in brilliant *quart d'heures* — except when the chains pressed — pressed — pressed. And then one day something happened that she had always dreaded. She had one love that she clung to in the great waste of her life, a love she could never speak of, could never show. And the chains that she had wrought could not crush out that love from her heart. Was it not strange? It was for the keeper of her child's prison,—her father. He died — whilst she danced and laughed — far away from him. A grim story, eh?

THE ARTIST

And the sequel?

THE ' DUPE '

That is to come. *Rich* now, through the death of her father, independent of her *friends*, she called them together to say farewell, and to close for ever the entries they had made in the book of her life. Gentlemen — my story is ended.

THE FINANCIER

She is in earnest. Farewell? Bah! I'm not going to lose her like that.

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THE POLITICIAN

Can it be that this is the end? Dear, dear.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[*To THE 'DUPE.'*] You have interested me deeply.

THE 'DUPE'

[*Bows mockingly.*] Oh, sir!

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I would never have thought it, never. It has been most helpful, most helpful.

THE ARTIST

[*To THE 'DUPE.'*] Why have you done this?

THE 'DUPE'

Wait. You'll see. Sermon next. Only a little one. Politician, you work in a glass-house with all the blinds drawn, and everything goes smoothly. But one day a blind is left up, the world peeps in, and then there is a crisis, eh? And the politician has to go. Why? Because, like everything human, he has made a mistake. *This* is a mistake. Take care no blind is left up! [*Holding up glass.*] Here's to the drawn blind. [*Moving to THE FINANCIER.*] Financier, your investments are good, your house is large, your servants many, your wife fat.

THE FINANCIER

[*Looking up angrily.*] What!

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THE 'DUPE'

Oh, it is true your wife has lost her attractiveness. But there are five — or are there *six*? — children.

THE FINANCIER

[*Furiously.*] Enough of that.

THE 'DUPE'

Oh, quite enough. But about yourself. You have put your life out at "profit and loss"—it reads *loss*. Money buys you nothing that is worth the buying. It is a millstone that is dragging you down, and others with you. May you lose every penny you have and work in the heat of the day. It would be your redemption! POVERTY to you!

THE FINANCIER

Rot!

THE 'DUPE'

[*To THE LITTÉRATEUR.*] And you, man of letters, skilful with your pen, brilliant in imagination, look up, my friend. Look at the stars, and the sky, and the sun. Smell the flowers. Don't walk amongst the refuse in the highways and the by-ways. Take the clean and the healthy for your subjects, not the halt, the lame and the blind. Remember, yours is the greatest power today. Don't throw it all away for the hospital, the boudoir, and the slum! Look up, my friend. Look up! [*Turns to the others.*] Why, how serious you all are! Because I have preached to you? And yet time and time again you have lectured me, eh?

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THE FINANCIER

Are we going to have much more of this?

THE 'DUPE'

Just as much or as little as I wish. [*Turning to THE ARTIST.*] Oh artist, quiet and pensive, a *picture!* Sweet eighteen; spoilt child; crying for what she cannot have. The sun above—the waving corn—and the maiden pining, pining, pining. But see! There is someone standing beside her. His eyes look brave and honest. He takes her hand. He kisses it! Look! The face is like someone's in this room! It is like your face! It's a *pretty* picture—eh? [*THE ARTIST moans, his face in his hands.*] Another picture. A poor lodging, a lonely woman, pale and ill, crying as though her heart would break, as though it were broken. Look closely, again. It is the *girl's* face, but *older, worn*, and with *knowledge* looking from behind the eyes. A hideous picture, eh? It is only *one*. There are hundreds no hand or tongue will ever paint. [*Leaves THE ARTIST: turns to the others.*] Story and sermon are over! And now for the last scene of this little comedy and in it you must all play a part. It is the scene that closes the board meeting by the payment of debts. I am indebted to you all—you are all indebted to me. I have kept the accounts. Politician, I owe you some glimpses of Paradise. Nice, Monte Carlo, Florence, Rome, Naples. You were a delightful guide and as kind as a friend. Your yacht was lovely—you gave it me. You called it “Butterfly” after me. I owe you

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as well some money. I return you everything. [*Hands him a packet, he refuses it.*] You must. It was a loan, — I took it without hesitation — I repay it. [*Leaves packet in his hands.*]

THE POLITICIAN

Really —

THE ‘ DUPE ’

My new journey begins tomorrow — tonight I pay back the past. Mr. Financier, what do I owe you? [*Thinks.*] Let me see. Norway — a happy time! I dreamed there, dreamed always. Such beautiful dreams too. Sometimes I look out of that little window, over the housetops, and dream them all again. This flat is yours, furniture, lease, everything. Also a little matter of shares with enormous dividends. I pay them back. [*Hands him a packet.*]

THE FINANCIER

Don't be a fool!

THE ‘ DUPE ’

I have always been a fool!

[*THE FINANCIER waves her away.*]

THE ‘ DUPE ’

You must! [*Forces the packet into his hands.*] And now, Littérateur — what do I owe you?

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Really —

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THE 'DUPE'

Serious talks. Paris for a month — more talks. London in the small hours — we talk again. All in the interests of literature. You thought you were expanding yourself body and soul in my company. You were really finding *life* in my changing moods — in my levity, my seriousness; my beauty, my hideousness; my temper, my smiles, my tears. You will endeavour to perpetuate me in some book or play and think you have benefited literature. Go to a factory or work-shop and take some girl with red hands and plaintive face — depict *her* and *her* struggles, *her* fears, *her* hopes, *her* joys, and you will do society and mankind a greater kindness than a hundred courtesans, with their scented rooms, false lives, false pleasures, false griefs, smiling faces and aching hearts. Go out into the beautiful world — leave us alone. God has given you a great gift. Use it *as* a great gift. Fly your banner to the sky. Don't trail it in the mud. Now what do I owe you? Why, of course. Three volumes of your poems. [*Takes them from the bookcase. Reads the titles aloud and hands them to him.*] "*Lost Souls.*" "*An Outcast of Paris.*" "*A Romance of the Morgue.*" There.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

But I don't want them. I *wrote* them.

THE 'DUPE'

I don't want them. I've *read* them. [*Embracing the four men in a gesture.*] One more toast — and then I

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dismiss you. You, Society thinks, are all my dupes. Society is wrong. It is *I* who am the *dupe* of *all*. This is the *Day of Dupes*. From cottage to palace — that dupe is woman! The dupe of love, of passion, of environment. Give us freedom, we dupes, and we would not be as I have been — a slave living in chains, chains forged by myself but placed on me by you. “The Day of Dupes! To the awakening of Woman!” [*Puts down her glass.*] The meeting is over, the board is dissolved! Take your hats and coats — say goodbye, and go out into the night! [*They all go for their hats and coats.*] Oh! Please don’t all go at once! Think of my reputation! But perhaps you *don’t* think of my reputation?

THE POLITICIAN

Can I never see you again?

THE ‘DUPE’

Never.

THE POLITICIAN

I will leave everything — home — public life. Come away —

THE ‘DUPE’

Hush! Goodbye! [*They stand looking at each other a moment — she drops her eyes — his hand clenches — he shivers — goes to door and passes out.*]

THE FINANCIER

This is all humbug — “Butterfly.”

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THE 'DUPE'

"Butterfly" no more. The summer-time is over and the beautiful "Butterfly" gives up her roaming and disappears.

THE FINANCIER

I'll come round tomorrow.

THE 'DUPE'

I shall be gone.

THE FINANCIER

I'll find you.

THE 'DUPE'

No use if you do. [THE FINANCIER *tries to take her in his arms. Repulsing him.*]

THE FINANCIER

I'll find you! [*Goes out abruptly.*]

THE LITTÉRATEUR

Perhaps it is for the best.

THE 'DUPE'

Let us hope so.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I am pleased — most pleased — to have known you.

THE 'DUPE'

Glad I've been useful.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

You wrong me.

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THE ' DUPE '

Do I?

THE LITTÉRATEUR

You do, indeed.

THE ' DUPE '

I will look out for another masterpiece on " La Courtesan." Call it " The Day of Dupes."

THE LITTÉRATEUR

I am the dupe. I thought you cared for me.

THE ' DUPE '

Not in the least.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

No?

THE ' DUPE '

No.

THE LITTÉRATEUR

[*Crestfallen.*] Oh! [*Goes out.*]

THE ' DUPE '

[*Looking at* THE ARTIST.] Why have you not gone? I see. I have not returned you your gifts. [*Takes locket and chain from around her neck.*] All you ever gave me. Take them! [*Throws them on the table.*] Give me again what I gave you! Go.

THE ARTIST

I can't leave you — like this.

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE ' DUPE '

You did once.

THE ARTIST

I'll make amends.

THE ' DUPE '

What amends can you make? [*Pause.*] Do you mean you'd marry me? [*Pause.*] You don't answer.

THE ARTIST

I would have asked you years ago, but I thought then that love should be free. That men and women work out their destinies more fully alone. I think so no longer.

THE ' DUPE '

What changed you?

THE ARTIST

Experience has taught me that no life can be fully expressed alone.

THE ' DUPE '

You mean no *man's* life?

THE ARTIST

Nor woman's. It is the perfect harmony of man and woman — two human beings forming one complete nature — that makes life at its fullest. When I left you, my art died. My fingers could paint no more. My inspiration had gone.

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE 'DUPE'

The cry of the sloven! The wail of the incompetent! Art is divine. It is not dependent on another human being. It is in *one's self*. The need of inspiration! The excuse of the vicious. The plea of the satyr to the innocent: "I need you as my inspiration." If your art depended on my degradation, it is better it should have died. You say no life can be fully expressed alone. Mine shall be. What has the companionship of men done for me? What has mine done for them? I am their equal by birthright. But they have never treated me as one. They did not want the *best* of me — they demanded the *worst*. And so the politician, the financier, the man of letters and the artist found their way to the one woman and in degrading her they degraded themselves. It is the canker in their natures; the open sore in their lives, that dulls their talents, dims their careers, and sends them to forgotten graves.

THE ARTIST

Let me do something. Let me at least help you. I am sorry. O, how I am sorry. Let me help you. You can't face the world alone. You tried to once. It brought you to this.

THE 'DUPE'

It is different now. You left me penniless. My father abandoned me as you did. But now I have money. It is only the *poor* men prey on. Money will keep the vultures away from me. They don't seek their prey when they are secured by money. You left me at

THE DAY OF DUPES

their mercy. I ask nothing of you, but to go. I never want to see you again. I only brought you here tonight to show you what wreck such as you can make of a woman's life. The love such as you offered — without reverence — can turn the child I was into the woman of bitterness I am now. I have drunk deeply of the waters of bitterness. I am indeed the "*Queen of Astrofelle*." I have shown you your lesson. Go.

[THE ARTIST *creeps out*. THE 'DUPE' *stands perfectly still for a few moments, then straightens up and flings up her arms with a great gesture of relief. Her eyes fall on the miniature. With a look of fury she snatches it up, goes to the fire, and hurls it into the grate. Then she rings, and stands looking into the fire. Enter THE ATTENDANT.*]

THE 'DUPE'

Is the car here?

THE ATTENDANT

Yes.

THE 'DUPE'

My trunks?

THE ATTENDANT

At the railway station.

THE 'DUPE'

My cloak.

[THE ATTENDANT *goes into the adjoining room and brings out cloak.*]

THE DAY OF DUPES

THE ' DUPE '

[*Putting it over her shoulders.*] Give the keys to the agent.

THE ATTENDANT

Your letters?

THE ' DUPE '

Left. No address.

THE ATTENDANT

Any callers?

THE ' DUPE '

Gone.

THE ATTENDANT

For good?

THE ' DUPE '

For good.

THE ATTENDANT

But —

THE ' DUPE '

Put that in the car. [*Points to a box on the table.*]

[*THE ATTENDANT takes up the box and goes out.*]

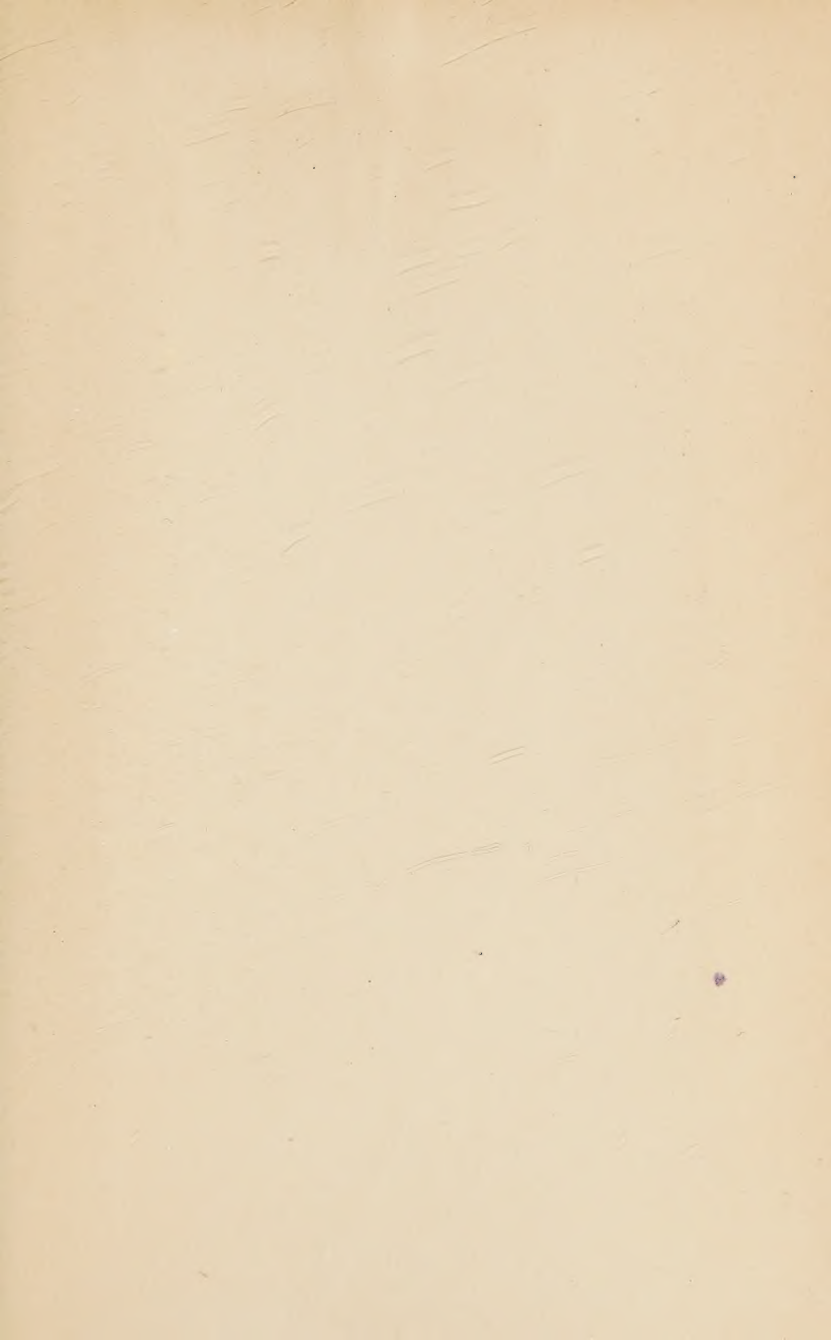
THE ' DUPE '

[*Looks around the room, turns off the lights. Only the glow from the fire in the room. She goes to the windows and thrusts them open. Very faintly can be heard Rubinstein's "Kammenoi Ostrow" in the near*

THE DAY OF DUPES

distance. THE 'DUPE' turns away from the window and looking upwards in an attitude of prayer, she pleads.] Oh, Thou — Thou who once forgave the Magdalen,— I come to You — even as she did — covered in Sin, an outcast of mankind, despised of women. I come to You to pray You to help me to walk alone! [*She passes out.*]

THE END



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